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THE HISTORICITY OF JESUS

A CRITICISM OF THE CONTENTION THAT JESUS NEVER LIVED, A STATEMENT OF THE EVIDENCE FOR HIS EXISTENCE, AN ESTIMATE OF HIS RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY

By

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PREFACE

The main purpose of the present volume is to set forth the evidence for believing in the historical reality of Jesus' existence upon earth. By way of approach, the characteristic features of more recent opinion regarding the historical Jesus have been surveyed, and, on the other hand, the views of those who deny his existence have been examined in detail. The negative arguments have been carefully analyzed in order accurately to comprehend the problem. In presenting the evidence for Jesus' historicity, an effort has been made both to meet opponents' objections and at the same time to give a fairly complete collection of the historical data upon which belief in his existence rests. Finally, the practical bearing of the discussion has been indicated by briefly considering Jesus' personal relation to the founding of the Christian movement and his significance for modern religion.

The needs of two classes of readers have been kept in mind. The general public, it is believed, will find the treatment suited to their tastes.

By a free use of footnotes the more technical side of the subject has also been presented for the benefit of readers wishing to study the question more minutely. No important phase in the history or in the present status of the problem has intentionally been ignored.

The author has made free use of some opinions which he had already expressed in the pages of the *Biblical World* and the *American Journal of Theology*, but these materials have been largely recast in becoming an integral part of the present work.

SHIRLEY JACKSON CASE

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CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL JESUS OF "LIBERAL" THEOLOGY

Is Jesus of Nazareth a historical individual, or is he purely a creation of fancy? While he is commonly thought to have lived in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago, Christendom has recently been disturbed by occasional voices proclaiming that this current belief is altogether without foundation in fact. Jesus' life of association with disciples, his ministry of healing and teaching, his conflicts with the religious leaders of that day, his death on the cross, in fact the whole of his alleged earthly career depicted in the New Testament is held to be entirely fictitious. He is not to be classed among those historical founders of religion who left so strong an impression upon their contemporaries that after death their memory was held in peculiar reverence by their followers; he belongs rather with those heroes of mythology who never had any earthly existence except that created for them by the anthropomorphizing fancy of naïve and primitive peoples.

This doubt about Jesus' existence is not an

entirely new problem. Its classic expression is to be found with Bruno Bauer more than half a century ago. Yet in its modern form it has new and important characteristics. Not only has it won a larger following than formerly, but it has been argued in a variety of ways and from several different points of view. It is often presented with a zeal which challenges attention even when the argument would not always command a hearing. Its advocates are occasionally accused, and perhaps not always unjustly, of displaying a partisan temper not consistent with the spirit of a truly scientific research, yet they sometimes vigorously declare themselves to be working primarily in the interests of genuine religion. Even though their position may ultimately be found untenable, the variety and insistency with which it is advocated cannot well be ignored.

There is also a certain degree of pertinency about this recent protest against Jesus' historicity. The problem has not been forced to the front in a purely arbitrary fashion. It might have been expected as one of the accompaniments—a kind of by-product one might almost say—of modern criticism's research upon the life of Jesus. When one sees how radically

the traditional conception of Jesus' person has been reconstructed by recent criticism, the possibility of denying his very existence is at least suggested. This question would have needed consideration even had it not arisen in the peculiar and somewhat unfortunate manner in which it has recently been presented. Too often its discussion has been left to those whose tastes are seemingly not primarily historical, and for whom the mere possibility of proposing this query seems to have meant a strong presupposition in favor of a negative answer.

Moreover the so-called historical Jesus of liberal theology is the specific target at which the skeptical arguments are aimed. The assailants, assuming that the traditional view of Jesus is unhistorical, believe that they can also demolish this figure which the liberal theologians set up as the Jesus of history. Has modern criticism, through its rejection of the older views about Jesus, set in motion a skeptical movement which proves equally destructive when directed against its own reconstruction of the history? This seems to be the point from which the problem of Jesus' historicity must at present be approached.

To what extent has the newer method of

study provoked doubt, or even supplied a plausible basis for questioning Jesus' existence? An examination of the chief critical attempts to reconstruct the picture of Jesus reveals the following significant elements of the so-called "liberal" thought.

In the first place, the philosophical presuppositions formerly underlying christological speculation have been supplanted by a world-view in which natural law is given a higher and more absolutely dominant position. Consequently the gospel stories of Jesus' mighty works are reinterpreted to bring them within the range of natural events, or else they are dismissed as utterly unhistorical. The ancients we are told were unable to distinguish critically between natural and supernatural activities, so that many events which today would be accounted perfectly normal, seemed in antiquity wholly abnormal and miraculous. Just as sickness and death were connected in thought with the action of superhuman agencies, so to calm the excitement of a lunatic, to stimulate by mental suggestion the withered nerves of a paralytic, to arouse a sick person from a death-like coma immediately became miracles of healing and resurrection.

Or, again, events that might not of themselves have seemed unusual may have been unduly magnified by an uncritical and miracle-loving imagination. To illustrate, it is held that the generous example of Jesus and his disciples in sharing their food with the members of the multitude who had no provisions inspired a similar generosity on the part of others in the crowd, and out of this circumstance grew the gospel stories of Jesus' feeding the five thousand and the four thousand. Similarly Jesus' instruction to Peter to catch a fish and sell it to procure money for the payment of the temple tax becomes a miraculous prediction about a coin to be found in a fish's mouth. A parable about a barren fig tree grows into a story of Jesus' unusual power to wither a tree which failed to supply him food for his breakfast. Many other miracle stories admit of a similar explanation, so it is asserted.

Again, it is thought that literary inventiveness, the use of the Old Testament, legends about the wonderful doings of the heroes of other religions, and a desire so to picture Jesus' career as to create admiration and awe may have combined to produce narratives which have not even a natural basis in the actual

history. To this class the nativity stories, the descent of the dove at baptism, the transfiguration incident, the resurrection and ascension narratives, and even the greater number of Jesus' alleged miracles, might conceivably be assigned. But whether they were originally unusual natural events, or ordinary happenings magnified into the miraculous, or mere creations of the narrator's imagination, the result is the same for modern thought of Jesus. He is no longer the miracle-working individual whom the gospels portray.[1] And if in this particular the gospel representation is fictitious perhaps it is not surprising that some persons should ask whether the whole portrait may not be a work of fancy.

[1] With the Deistic movement in England in the seventeenth century, and rationalism in Germany a century later, there appeared a pronounced tendency to rid Christianity of the miraculous. In 1696 Toland wrote *Christianity not Mysterious, a Proof That in the Gospels Nothing Is Opposed to or Beyond Reason.* Reimarus (*Von dem Zwecke Jesu und seiner Jünger: Noch ein Fragment des Wolfenbüttelschen Ungenannten*, Herausgegeben von G. E. Lessing, Braunschweig, 1778) expressed the opinion that Jesus had not worked miracles, for had he possessed this ability his failure to meet the demand for a sign, and his allowing the crisis at Jerusalem to pass without displaying his power to the utmost, would be incomprehensible. The "Rationalists," of whom Paulus (*Das Leben Jesu als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums*, Heidelberg, 1828) is one of the best representatives, explained all miracles as natural events. But Strauss (*Das*

Furthermore, religious knowledge is no longer thought to be supernaturally acquired. Instead of relying upon some record of a supposedly supernatural revelation as a basis for authentic religious knowledge, reason and human experience have been made fundamental. It is now said that even the Bible writers were wholly conditioned by their own mental grasp upon the world of thought surrounding them. For then the earth was a disk with the arched roof of heaven above, the abode of the departed beneath, and God and spirits plying back and forth in these regions n truly anthropomorphic fashion. Not only were all religious ideas limited to the intellectual outlook of that age, but the religious experience of the ancients was primarily the outcome of their own spiritual reaction upon their world. So historical events and persons are significant for the present chiefly as a means of enlarging our sphere of reality, thus supplying a domain

Leben Jesu, Tübingen, 1835 and 1836) easily showed to what absurdities such attempts led, and he accordingly regarded the miracle stories as pure fictions. Since Strauss, "liberal" theology has not concerned itself very seriously with this problem. By general agreement the supernaturalistic faith of former times is rejected. The rationalistic explanation is applied to part of the gospel miracles, while for others the mythical theory of Strauss is adopted.

for the enrichment of thought and experience. In other words, religious knowledge must be acquired by the same laws and through the same channels—and through no others—employed for the acquirement of human knowledge in general.

It follows that so far as religion can claim to be "truthful" this quality must inhere in its very nature—it cannot be derived from an external authority. Nearly a century and a half ago Lessing expressed the idea tersely in his ninth "axiom": "Religion is not true because the evangelists and apostles taught it, but they taught it because it is true"—or because it seemed to them true, moderns would add.[1] What has been recorded may represent the noblest thought of a past age, but no fact of history can be established so surely, and no notion of the past stands so wholly above the limited ideas of its own age, that a later generation may safely make these things objective norms for testing the validity of its knowledge. A world-view cannot be built on scripture, nor

[1] Axiom 10 also puts the main point clearly: "Aus ihrer innern Wahrheit müssen die schriftlichen Ueberlieferungen erkläret werden, und alle schriftliche Ueberlieferungen können ihr keine innern Wahrheit geben, wenn sie keine hat." And again: "Zufällige Geschichtswahrheiten können der Beweis von notwendigen Vernunftwahrheiten nie werden."

can the highest type of religious experience result merely from acceptance of an objectively authenticated creed. In the opinion of "liberal" theologians, if the content of Christian thinking today would be "truthful" it must answer to the highest intellectual demands of modern times and must be in harmony with the noblest type of spiritual ideals at present attainable.

Accordingly the religious values of life are no longer thought to be conditioned by the truth or falsity of alleged historic facts. These values have a self-attesting quality quite apart from any supposition as to where or how the recognition of their worth first came to expression in history. Indeed, to condition present-day religious ideals by norms and decrees of a past age, or to measure values by past standards, is now thought detrimental to the highest type of spiritual attainment. Bondage to legalism, whether in the realm of thought or conduct, means a deadening of the genuine life of the spirit, hence the need to break the "entangling alliance" between religion and history in order to give the spirit liberty. Reflection upon the life of the past may prove helpful and even inspirational if one avoids

thinking of it in terms of a deadening legalism. But the greatest values of religion are not to be found fossilized in the strata of Jewish and Christian history; they still await production in the present and the future.

When this modern attitude on the general question of religious authority is brought to bear upon one's thought of the historical Jesus the traditional conception of his authority is radically modified. Since the "liberals" maintain that religious knowledge is neither acquired nor made valid by supernatural means and that spiritual attainments have not been standardized once and for all time by supernatural demonstrations, even if Jesus is assumed to be the fountain of supernaturally revealed religious knowledge, there is now no absolutely certain means of knowing just what had been thus revealed. The evangelists wrote about him, as about everything else, in terms of the limited notions of their time. Their ideas—and, so far as our information goes, his ideas too—moved only in the atmosphere of first-century thinking, and so cannot be normative for the truthfulness of twentieth-century thought. And since religious values today must be judged by the tests of modern demands, past values, though they

proved sufficient for the first century, may no longer have abiding worth. If they do retain their value this is not because of their historic origin, even should that be Jesus himself, but is wholly due to their modern efficiency. Had they never before existed, in all probability modern needs would have produced them just as new values are being created today to meet contemporary needs. Thus Jesus becomes so relatively insignificant as an authority in religious matters that it is scarcely strange to find an inclination in some quarters to deny his existence outright.

Still more disturbing is the fact that the Jesus of "liberal" theology is not a supernatural person, at least not in any real sense of that term as understood by the traditional Christology. The Johannine logos-idea and the Pauline notion of pre-existence are not now treated as fundamental items in one's thought of the historical Jesus; these are rather the product of primitive interpretation. Also the stories in Matthew and Luke about unusual happenings attending Jesus' entrance into the life of humanity are believed to be merely the attempts of early faith to supply an appropriate background in the imagery of that day

for its conception of his uniqueness. Jesus, it is affirmed, can be best and most truly known as a man among men, and his personality is to be estimated in terms of the qualities displayed in the ordinary activities of his earthly life. All efforts to make his origin supernatural are held to be the work of interpretation, originating in an age which found its highest thought-categories in supernaturalism.

Likewise the constitution of his personality in general is regarded by the "liberals" as belonging wholly in the natural sphere. His thinking had a truly physical basis in its contact with local phenomena, and its processes, so far as they were normal, were in line with regular psychological laws. If they were abnormal they are to be placed on the same basis as abnormal mental processes in general. Descriptions of personal contact with Satan, ministrations of angels, personal communications with a Moses or an Elijah, and the like, are all taken as pictures to express vividly normally conditioned spiritual experiences of Jesus; otherwise he must have been the victim of hallucinations. Those who hold this view would not deny that Jesus' experience was of an exceedingly rich and pure type, but only

that it was not something miraculously given to him from without. It was rather a personal attainment through the ordinary processes of spiritual activity, and his uniqueness lay in the exceptional way in which he cultivated these processes and in the unusual quality of perfection he thus attained.

With respect to Jesus' mental activities, "liberal" interpretation seems not to have worked its view out quite so consistently and clearly as at some other points. This is particularly true regarding the question of his messianic self-consciousness. Beyond all question his mental condition as viewed by the evangelists is explicable only on the assumption that his thinking was supernaturally controlled, or that he was mentally unbalanced. The alternative is to make the blurred gospel picture of him responsible for the distortion, and this is the solution usually adopted by "liberal" interpretation. Yet Jesus is allowed to set himself forward in all seriousness as the Messiah. At once the question arises, How far and in what sense can he have claimed messiahship and still have preserved mental normality? We are usually told that he arrived at this conviction experientially; it was a deduction drawn

from his sense of unique spiritual kinship to God. He transfused the current conception of messiahship with a supremely spiritual interpretation; yet as his work on earth failed to bring about the complete establishment of the kingdom, Jesus came to believe, and announced his conviction to his followers, that he would in the near future come upon the clouds to set up the kingdom in its perfection. But for any individual whose personality is *ex hypothesi* non-supernatural, to confer upon himself the prerogatives of that superhuman messianic figure of apocalyptic imagery is a severe strain upon our notion of normal mental action even in that age.[1] Hence it is not so strange that some interpreters should find Jesus making no

[1] DeLoosten, *Jesus Christus vom Standpunkte des Psychiaters* (Bamberg, 1905), thinks Jesus was mentally unsound and so subject to delusions. For Rasmussen, *Jesus: Eine vergleichende psychopathologische Studie* (Leipzig, 1905; translated from the Danish *Jesus, en sammenlignende Studie*, 1905), Jesus was an epileptic. Against these views frequent protests have been made. Kneib, *Moderne Leben-Jesu-Forschung unter dem Einflusse der Psychiatrie* (Mainz, 1908), lays the blame for these theories upon what seems to him the a-priori exclusion of supernaturalism from Jesus' person. His abnormality is to be explained by his divinity: "entweder war Jesus Christus geisteskrank oder er war Gottmensch." Werner, *Die psychische Gesundheit Jesu* (Gross-Lichterfelde, 1909), contends for the mental soundness of Jesus, but, like Kneib, thinks that any interpretation which brings Jesus down to a purely human level must admit his insanity. Weidel, *Jesu Persönlich-*

personal claims to messiahship; or that the more radical critics should imagine that his first interpreters, who admittedly created his superhuman personality, may also have evolved out of their own fancy the entire picture of his earthly career.

The religion and worship which grew up in the Apostolic age about the name of Jesus the Messiah formerly was thought to have been founded upon, and fostered by, special supernatural manifestations. But the "liberal" estimate of Christianity's historical origin would also eliminate these features. The miraculous resurrection of Jesus is undoubtedly a tenet of the first Christians' faith, but to go back of that faith and establish by critical tests the reliability of any corresponding objective fact

keit: Eine psychologische Studie (Halle a.S., 1908), adopting the results of modern gospel criticism, still finds Jesus to have acted quite unusually but credits this to his possession of an unusual volitional energy. Schaefer, *Jesus in psychiatrischer Beleuchtung: Eine Kontroverse* (Berlin, 1910), from the standpoint of a physician who is at the same time inclined to liberal theological views, protests especially against deLoosten's treatment of Jesus as a paranoiac. Sanday, *Christologies Ancient and Modern* (Oxford, 1910), though not discussing this particular topic, finds, in the subliminal regions of Jesus' mental life, a special, divine influence which produced a unique effect in his conscious mental activities. The real problem is thus pushed a little farther back but is still left unsolved. Cf. Coe, "Religion and the Subconscious," *American Journal of Theology*, XIII (1909), 337–49.

is held to be no longer possible. Furthermore, the point of departure for the early belief in Jesus' resurrection is said to be a conviction on the part of certain persons that Jesus had been seen by them after his burial,[1] and these visions may have been due to a combination of purely natural circumstances. For a long time the disciples had been under a severe strain; they had passed through particularly unnerving experiences at Jerusalem; then they returned to scenes of former association with Jesus where memories of him were newly awakened and former hopes revived with increased power. These circumstances brought about unusual psychic experiences interpreted by those who shared them as visions of the risen Jesus. Thus the indelible impression of his historical personality upon their lives bore its natural fruitage. He was "risen" more truly than they realized. Not ecstatic experiences induced by an over-wrought nervous condition, nor an

[1] In the New Testament tradition about the origin of the resurrection faith, one readily recognizes the subordinate place occupied by the empty tomb. Its discovery meant nothing until some member of the company experienced an "appearance." Cf. Lake, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (London and New York, 1907, pp. 241–53); and the present writer's article "The Resurrection Faith of the First Disciples" in the *American Journal of Theology*, XIII (1909), 169–92.

interpretation of these experiences in terms of current notions about the visibility of angels and spirits, but their own renewed and increased spiritual energy truly proved Jesus' return to life. The real corner-stone of the new religion was not the resurrection appearances, but the "Easter faith" by which the spirit of Jesus' own life found living expression in the person of his disciples.

Similarly the whole range of the early church's enthusiastic life, once imagined to be a miraculous attestation of the genuineness of the new faith, is now explained on the purely natural basis of religious psychology. The early believers, like most men of that time, were highly emotional and superstitious. They peopled the world about them with a generous supply of spirits, evil as well as good. Any unusual state of nervous excitement took on a highly religious significance, and even ordinary events were readily magnified into marvelous manifestations of the supernatural. Consequently the abnormal phases of life loomed largest in their vision, and they turned to this region above all others to find evidence for the validity of their new faith. Nor was their search in vain. Soon they found themselves

able to speak with "tongues," they performed "miracles," they saw visions and dreamed dreams, angels ministered to them in moments of special distress, and, indeed, at times God drew so near that the earth trembled as did Mount Sinai in days of old. For the primitive Christians these experiences were the divinely given anticipatory signs of the coming messianic age; for moderns the whole ecstatic life of that period seems to have become only an interesting study in folk psychology.

Even the whole scheme of theological thinking constructed about the person of the heavenly Christ is now regarded as mainly a product of the first interpreters' fancy. Paul and his contemporaries built largely upon the expectation of Jesus' early return to bring an end to the present world-order. The fact of his ignominious death seemed a serious objection to the doctrine of his messiahship, so believers were compelled to find some explanation that would bring this event into harmony with their messianic faith. Paul was exceptionally successful in this effort, in that he made Jesus' death a fundamental element in the Messiah's saving mission. By reflection this figure of the heavenly Messiah grew in prominence until he became

the object of a godlike reverence and worship. In fact, by degrees, believers began to transfer to the risen Jesus many notions which they formerly would have entertained with reference to God only. In like manner the tenets of first-century Christology were worked out to meet various inclinations and necessities of contemporary thinking.

Hence the religion which has Jesus as its object is to be sharply distinguished from the personal religion of Jesus. It is now believed by the "liberals" that he did not set himself forward as an object for reverence and worship, but that his primary concern was to point men directly to God, the God whom he himself worshiped with full devotion of heart, soul, and mind. In this way he entered into a rich realization of sonship to God and he craved for all men the blessings of a similar attainment. As for his own position, the attitude of deification assumed by the early church after his death was farthest from his thoughts. "He desired no other belief in his person and no other attachment to it than is contained in the keeping of his commandments. . . . . This feeling, praying, working, struggling, and suffering individual is a man who in the face of his

God also associates himself with other men."[1] Lessing's sentences on the "Religion of Christ" state the point so clearly, showing at the same time how keenly the problem was grasped more than a century ago, that we venture to repeat them slightly condensed:

> Whether Christ [i.e., "Jesus," in modern usage] was more than man is a problem. That he was truly man, if he was man at all, and that he never ceased being man, is admitted. Consequently the religion of Christ and the Christian religion are two quite distinct things. The former is that religion which he himself as a man recognized and practiced, and which every man can have in common with him. The latter is that religion which assumes that he was more than a man and makes him as such the object of its worship. The existence of these two religions in Christ [i.e., in "Jesus"] as in one and the same person is inconceivable. The teachings and principles of both are scarcely to be found in one and the same book; at least it is clear that the religion of Christ and the Christian religion are quite differently contained in the gospels. The former is there expressed most clearly and distinctly. The latter, on the other hand, is so uncertain and ambiguous that there is hardly a single passage with which any two persons have connected the same thought.

But in the New Testament story of the Apostolic age this supernatural figure of the heavenly

[1] Harnack, *What Is Christianity* (London and New York, 1901, pp. 125 f.; *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Leipzig, 1900).

Christ certainly stands in the foreground. The early Christians' gaze was directed mainly to the future, not to the past. Their hope was in the Coming One. Recognition of Paul's lack of concern with the earthly Jesus and his whole-souled devotion to the heavenly Christ is a commonplace of modern thinking. Under these circumstances it would appear that we must expect to find the story of Jesus' earthly career so portrayed as to show supernatural traits befitting one who will later enjoy messianic honors in the divine sphere. But if the first Christians in their religion and worship formed this highly colored picture of the Christ largely out of subjective elements of their own thinking, as the "liberals" tell us, and then carried back into an earthly career foreshadowings of his dignity and power, may not the very idea of an earthly existence have the same subjective origin? If so, the anthropomorphizing interest was merely one of the steps in the general process of making concrete and objective those notions which seemed of greatest worth in primitive religious thinking. It is at least only fair to admit that modern critical study has prepared the soil out of which queries of this sort readily spring. Perhaps

they are only a mushroom growth, yet it is not so surprising that they should seem to some eyes to be the seedlings of giant oaks.

It must be admitted that modern critical study, on its negative side, largely discounts the traditional history of Jesus, if it does not indeed provoke doubt about his very existence. Yet "liberal" theology's own belief in the historicity of Jesus is not in the least disturbed. When the traditional view of him has been virtually demolished, moderns assert that they have only removed fungoid growths from his real historical form, and that they would thus not only restore his original figure but also make him more significant for religious thought. Accordingly they propose to return to Jesus—not merely to the gospel representation of him, and not even to the oldest available sources' picture of him, but back beyond all these "interpretations" to the original Jesus unadorned by the fancy of his admiring followers. While this task is not easy, it is thought to be possible by means of a careful literary and historical criticism. Its advocates do not claim to be able to produce full details of Jesus' career but only to restore a partial, yet real, glimpse of his personality. The main features

of his activity, the essential elements of his teaching, and the deep impression which his life made upon his associates are held to be recoverable.

Of course not all "liberal" investigators agree exactly in their positive results, and this fact is sometimes used as an argument against the reliability of any of their work. Yet, in what they regard as essentials, there is in the main uniformity of opinion. It is commonly agreed that Jesus' own personal religious life shall be made the basis for estimating his character and significance. Abandoning metaphysical speculations about his origin and nature, we are asked to fix attention upon him as a man among men in order that we may discover the content of that religion which he actually embodied in his own life, and sought by example and precept to persuade others to realize for themselves. He met life's issues in a perfectly natural way, yet he shared that full inspiration of spirit which is available for every noble, normal, spiritually minded individual. For him religion meant perfect fellowship with God and loyalty to the highest ideals of personal duty toward one's fellows. In revealing this noblest thought of the divine, Jesus was

revealing God, and so was performing a saving work for mankind. Thus the historically reliable and important features of his career are not his alleged display of miracle-working ability, or any other demonstrations of supernatural and messianic authority, but his impressive personal religious life.

As for his teaching, it was chiefly concerned with the establishment of God's kingdom. This, more specifically, meant the realization on man's part of true sonship to God, who, in his essentially loving attitude toward humanity, was the Father. The highest privileges for men lay in becoming sons of God through the cultivation in their own lives of this divine quality of love. Only in the light of this thought could the values of life be estimated aright. The human soul and its eternal welfare was the thing of first importance. The soul's safety was to be insured by a life of fidelity to the divine will, the individual trusting at the same time in the goodness of the heavenly Father who was more willing to forgive and love men than human parents were to show a similar attitude toward their children. For the true son of God, heart righteousness was fundamental. Casuistry and formality were to be

eliminated; only that which was essential and genuinely sincere was worth while. When formalism was set aside and men turned in sincerity to the Father, salvation was assured. Thus Jesus' teaching was fundamentally a message of salvation—not a salvation whose realization must be awaited in some far-away time, but a present spiritual possession.

During Jesus' lifetime the significance of his work and teaching had, according to this interpretation, been but very imperfectly comprehended. Traditional notions about a Messiah who was to deliver the Jews from their bondage to foreign rulers bulked so large in men's thoughts that Jesus' emphasis upon the more distinctly spiritual values of religion received only a feeble response. Yet when his death shattered the disciples' last lingering hopes that he would relieve Israel from Roman oppression, they did not dismiss him from their thoughts and count him among those mistaken messianic agitators with whom the Jewish people, since the time of Judas of Gamala, had become more or less familiar. Instead of abandoning hope Jesus' disciples built, on the foundation of their memory of personal association with him, the daring structure of

new hope such as no one in Israel had ever before ventured to surmise. They confidently proclaimed that a human being, even a man who had died, was to figure as the supernatural Messiah coming in glory on the clouds. This new messianism was not however the heart of the new faith; it was only the outward expression of an inward life-stimulus which went back to Jesus as its source. The new hope served as a vehicle to bear along for a few generations this new spiritual energy which had emanated from Jesus, but ultimately the vehicle was to be discarded. History soon proved that these hopes were false. Yet the Jesus-life continued to make a successful appeal to men, prompting new interpretations of his person and work. Thus began that struggle which has sometimes caused great distress in religious thinking—the struggle to readjust christological speculations. But Jesus' place in the founding and perpetuating of Christianity is one of life rather than of theory, and "liberal" interpreters are disposed to confine thought of him to the former realm.

We need not, it is said, go beyond this simple picture of Jesus' life and teaching, the power of which has been practically demonstrated

in the founding of Christianity, to find those features which give his personality its paramount significance for religion today. As stated by some of the best-known representatives of the liberal view:

The nearer we draw to Jesus in the tradition the more does all dogmatic theology recede. We behold a man who, more than any other, by his clear word makes us understand ourselves, the world, and God, and who goes with us amid the needs and struggles of our time as the truest friend and guide on whom we may rely for comfort.[1]

In spite of our remoteness in time and the frequently painful uncertainty of the tradition, we who are thus distantly connected with the great story of Jesus handed down through the centuries can still find him, in his trust in God and his nearness to God, in his relentless moral earnestness, in his conquest over pain, in his certainty of the forgiveness of sins, and in his eternal hope, to be the guide of our souls to God.[2]

This unique historical personality, apart from all outer forces, alone through his inner greatness created the world-encompassing spiritual movement of Christianity. . . . . He is the founder of our inner Christian life as well. . . . . His powerful personality constrains us to share both his faith in God's holy and fatherly

[1] Wernle, *Sources of Our Knowledge of the Life of Jesus* (London, 1907, p. 163; *Die Quellen des Lebens Jesu*, Tübingen, 1905).

[2] Bousset, *Jesus* (3. Aufl., Tübingen, 1907, pp. 99 f.; cf. English tr., *Jesus*, London and New York, 1906, p. 211).

love and his own life of holy love. Thus he makes us truly joyous and happy, giving to our life true worth and abiding meaning.[1]

Such in brief is the historical Jesus of "liberal" theology. Needless to say, this reconstruction of Jesus' career, and this interpretation of his significance, have met with severe opposition from different quarters. Of necessity adherents of the older Christology must declare unceasing war upon so free a treatment of the traditions, and especially upon so thoroughgoing a rejection of supernaturalism. This complete elimination of supernaturalism is also repellant to the semi-liberal school of theologians who have come to be known as "modern positivists."[2] All these opponents urge that Jesus' person and worth have been seriously underestimated. On the other hand, a radical type of interpretation insists that too high a value has been placed upon him. We are told that he has no such significance for modern religion as even the "liberals" imagine. His ideal individuality, his high ethico-religious

[1] A. Meyer, *Was uns Jesus heute ist* (Tübingen, 1907, pp. 41 f.).

[2] A convenient summary of their position is given by Bousset in the *Theologische Rundschau*, IX (1906), 287–302, 327–40, 371–81, 413–24; and by G. B. Smith in the *American Journal of Theology*, XIII (1909), 92–99.

thought, and the like, are said to be only modern ideas read back into his historic figure. This process is held not to be different in principle from that employed by the first-century interpreters in constructing a Christology which should embody the most valuable ideas of their age. Furthermore this modern "Jesusism" is declared to be inadequate to meet the demands of modern life. Ethically it does not supply sufficient values, socially it is not closely enough in touch with present-day conditions, intellectually it ignores metaphysical questions and philosophical problems in general with too easy a conscience.

And then come the extremists who would wipe the historical Jesus entirely off the slate. They subscribe to the objections raised above, combining and supplementing them in a way to prove, they think, that Jesus never lived. The conservative theologians also unite with these extreme radicals in contending that the historical Jesus whom modern critical study posits never could have supplied to primitive Christianity its initial incentive. His personality is too shadowy, too ordinary, to have exerted so unique an influence—his figure must be greatly enlarged. But in what direction

shall the enlargement be made? At this point conservatives and radicals come to a sharp parting of the ways. The former maintain that a genuinely historical Jesus must be identified with the real supernatural Christ, the latter hold that an alleged historical Jesus must give place to the fanciful image of a mythical Christ. When the conservatives rejoice over the fate which the Jesus of liberal theology has met at the hands of these modern radicals, they would seem to be sounding the death knell of their own christological views. For if the earthly Jesus must go, how much more completely must any supposed reality of a supernatural Christ be abandoned! Indeed he is denied existence by the very presuppositions of the radicals' thought, while the earthly Jesus is, at least ostensibly, argued out of existence.

Hence an attempt from the conservative point of view to refute the particular type of denial at present urged against Jesus' historicity could in the nature of the case amount to but little more than the assertion of one set of presuppositions as over against another set. There is no common ground on which arguments pro and contra may rest. One view places

primary stress on supernaturalism, the other dismisses supernaturalism before argumentation begins. Therefore, for practical purposes, if on no other grounds, it is desirable to meet the opposition at its own point of attack. And since denial of Jesus' existence proceeds directly against the so-called liberal interpretation, the most immediate and practical question is, Can his existence be successfully defended from the "liberal" theology's own position? This is the present problem.

CHAPTER II

THE MYTHICAL CHRIST OF RADICAL CRITICISM

The modern denial of Jesus' historicity is not without its antecedents. As early as the end of the eighteenth century certain French writers classed Christianity among the mythical religions of antiquity, and Jesus' person took on a correspondingly shadowy form.[1] Both Judaism and Christianity were explained as mainly a composite of primitive oriental ideas, derived more particularly from Persia and ultimately going back to astral myths.

Contemporaneously in Germany Bahrdt[2] and Venturini[3] introduced a skeptical movement in reaction against the prevailing supernaturalism of current interpretation. They had no inten-

[1] E.g., Volney, *Les ruines* (Paris, 1791); Dupuis, *Origine de tous les cultes* (Paris, 1794; German tr., *Ursprung der Gottesverehrung*, Leipzig, 1910). Cf. Geneval, *Jésus devant l'histoire n'a jamais vécu* (Geneva, 1874).

[2] *Briefe über die Bibel im Volkston. Eine Wochenschrift von einem Prediger auf dem Lande* (Halle, 1782); *Ausführung des Plans und Zwecks Jesu. In Briefen an Wahrheit suchende Leser* (11 vols., Berlin, 1784–92); *Die sämtlichen Reden Jesu aus den Evangelisten ausgezogen* (Berlin, 1786).

[3] *Natürliche Geschichte des grossen Propheten von Nazareth* (4 vols., Bethlehem [Copenhagen], 1800–2, 1806[2]).

tion of denying Jesus' existence, yet their reconstruction of his life so far forsook the gospel representation as to leave his real historical form largely a matter of conjecture. They found the secret of his career in his connection with the Essenes. This order was believed to have drawn upon Babylonia, Egypt, India, and Greece for secret wisdom. Jesus was not only a member of this brotherhood, he was also its protégé. In youth he had been trained in its secrets, and during his public ministry he was closely in touch with the leading brethren. Thus the Jesus of the gospels is virtually a myth, while the true Jesus was the exponent of this ancient and secret wisdom. This general interpretation has been reproduced in England by Hennell,[1] in France by Salvator,[2] and it has been followed in Germany by von Langsdorf,[3]

[1] *An Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity* (London, 1838). Cf. Fiebig, "Die Worte Jesu," *Die Christliche Welt*, 1911, 26–29, 50–53.

[2] *Jésus-Christ et sa doctrine* (2 vols., Paris. 1838). Also de Régla (Desjardin). *Jésus de Nazareth au point de vue historique, scientifique et social* (Paris, 1891; German tr., *Jesus von Nazareth*, Leipzig, 1894); Notowitsch, *La vie inconnue de Jésus-Christ* (Paris, 1894³; German tr., *Die Lücke im Leben Jesu*, Stuttgart, 1894; English tr., *The Unknown Life of Christ*, Chicago [no date]); Bosc, *La vie ésotérique de Jésus de Nazareth et les origines orientales du Christianisme* (Paris, 1902).

[3] *Wohlgeprüfte Darstellung des Lebens Jesu* (Mannheim, 1831).

Gfrörer,[1] von der Alm (Ghillany),[2] and Noack,[3] who in turn contribute some items to the views of the modern extremists.

Strauss's application of the mythical theory to the gospel narratives is a much more masterful piece of work and it has, accordingly, exerted a much greater influence. Strauss never seems to have doubted Jesus' actual existence, nor did he attempt, after the manner

[1] *Kritische Geschichte des Urchristentums* (2 vols., Stuttgart, 1831–38).

[2] *Theologische Briefe an die Gebildeten der deutschen Nation* (3 vols., Leipzig, 1863); cf. also *Die Urteile heidnischer und christlicher Schriftsteller der vier ersten christlichen Jahrhunderte über Jesus* (*ibid.*, 1864).

[3] *Aus der Jordanwiege nach Golgatha: vier Bücher über das Evangelium und die Evangelien* (Mannheim, 1870–71); a second edition with changed title, *Die Geschichte Jesu auf Grund freier geschichtlicher Untersuchungen über das Evangelium und die Evangelien* (1876). Of a similarly fictitious character are the following anonymous publications: *Wichtige Enthüllungen über die wirkliche Todesart Jesu. Nach einem alten, zu Alexandria gefundenen Manuskripte von einem Zeitgenossen Jesu aus dem heiligen Orden der Essäer* (Leipzig, 1849[5]); *Historische Enthüllungen über die wirklichen Ereignisse der Geburt und Jugend Jesu. Als Fortsetzung der zu Alexandria aufgefundenen alten Urkunden aus dem Essäerorden* (Leipzig, 1849[2]); *Wer war Jesus? Authentische Mitteilungen eines Zeitgenossen Jesu über Geburt, Jugend, Leben und Todesart, sowie über die Mutter des Nazareners. Nach einem alten, zu Alexandrien aufgefundenen Manuskripte. Aus einer lateinischen Abschrift des Originals übersetzt* (Oranienburg bei Berlin, 1906); *The Crucifixion, by an Eye-Witness* (Chicago, 1907).

of Bahrdt and Venturini, a fanciful rehabilitation of Jesus' figure. Yet his work prepared the way for that champion of radicalism, Bruno Bauer, who has given classic expression to the arguments against Jesus' historicity.

In the controversy which followed the appearance of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, Bauer found himself compelled to oppose the contemporary apologists. He, like Strauss, belonged to the Hegelian school, from which he derived his notion of the supremacy of the idea. Between the idea and the reality there is a perpetual antithesis. The idea is, as it were, a fleeing goal which men sight now and then but never ultimately apprehend. Indeed the idea never can be perfectly realized in a historic manifestation—that would mean its death. So Bauer revolted against the current theological method of forcing Jesus' personality into a hard-and-fast system of theology, with the accompanying claim of finality. True religion, for Bauer, is attained by the self-conscious ego setting itself up in antithesis to, and struggling to triumph over, the world. This victory is not to be won through violence, through man's fighting against Nature, as the doctrine of miracle implies; it is brought about by man's

realization of his own personality. "Spirit does not bluster, rave, storm, and rage against Nature as is implied in miracle—this would be a denial of its inner law, but it works its own way through the antithesis." A second antithesis of which men are conscious is the separation between God and man, and this too is to be overcome not by external means, but through an inward triumph of spirit. One who in his inner consciousness has brought about the synthesis of this double antithesis has attained genuine religion.

Under these circumstances it is scarcely surprising that Bauer should protest against what must have seemed to him the false and grossly externalizing features in the theological thinking of his day. At the outset he apparently had no thought of denying the existence of a historical Jesus. He aimed rather to exhibit what seemed to him the falsehood and intellectual dishonesty of the apologetic methods used by the critics of Strauss. So he began a critical examination of the gospels, the authorities to which the theologians appealed in support of their position. Bauer first demonstrated, as he thought, that the picture of Jesus given in the Fourth Gospel was not historical

but was a creation of primitive theological reflection.[1] Attention was next directed to the Synoptists, where the recent conclusions of Weisse and Wilke as to the priority of Mark were adopted. But if Mark was the main source for the first and third evangelists, then the united testimony of all three gospels is in reality the testimony of one witness only; and this upon further examination also proved untrustworthy. The Gospel of Mark was thought to be merely a literary fiction, the product of an original evangelist's theological reflections. Consequently all three Synoptists were to be set aside as entirely unhistorical.[2] A similar result attended Bauer's study of the Pauline literature.[3] The so-called Pauline epistles were all found to be pseudonymous products of the second century A.D. Accordingly all evidence for Jesus' existence vanished. He was not Christianity's founder; he was merely its fictitious product.

[1] *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte des Johannes* (Bremen, 1840).

[2] *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker* (3 vols., Leipzig, 1841–42); 2d ed., *Kritik der Evangelien und Geschichte ihres Ursprungs* (2 vols., Berlin, 1850–51).

[3] *Kritik der paulinischen Briefe.* In drei Abteilungen (Berlin, 1850–52).

How then did the new movement originate? In answering this question Bauer allowed his fancy free play.[1] The absence of reference to the new religion in the non-Christian writings of the first century was cited as evidence of its late origin. It was a gradual outcome of conditions prevailing in the Graeco-Roman world of the first and second centuries A.D. In general the Stoics, and particularly Seneca, had attained a consciousness of the antithesis between man and the world; and conditions under Nero and Domitian, especially with the introduction of neo-Platonic ideas, showed a marked development in the spiritual history of humanity. Moreover in this period Judaism was being denationalized, as in the case of Philo and Josephus, and thus its spiritual solution for the antithesis between God and man was made available for the gentile world. In this way a new type of thought arose which received the name Christianity—a compound of Stoicism, neo-Platonism and Judaism. Rome and Alexandria were its two centers, and it first attracted public notice in the time of Trajan.

Bauer's results finally passed almost un-

[1] *Christus und die Caesaren. Der Ursprung des Christentums aus dem römischen Griechentum* (Berlin, 1877, 1879[2]).

noticed, yet the fundamental lines of his work are not so very different from those followed by the modern radicals. Summarized, the main items of his criticism are: (1) emphasis upon definite speculative presuppositions, (2) an unqualified treatment of the New Testament books as tendency writings, (3) stress upon the lack of non-Christian evidence for the existence of Christianity in the first century, and (4) a belief that all factors necessary to account for the origin of Christianity without reference to a historical Jesus can be found in the life of the ancient world.

Within the last decade doubts about Jesus' existence have been advanced in several quarters,[1] but nowhere so insistently as in Germany. There the skeptical movement has become a regular propaganda.[2] The present status of

[1] E.g., in America by W. B. Smith; in England by J. M. Robertson, Mead, Whittaker; in Holland by Bolland; in France by Virolleaud (*La légende du Christ*, Paris, 1908); in Italy by Bossi (*Gesù Christo non è mai esistito*, Milan, 1904); in Poland by Niemojewski; in Germany by Kalthoff, Jensen, Drews, Lublinski, and several others.

[2] Its foremost champion is Arthur Drews, professor of philosophy in Karlsruhe Technical High School. Since the appearance of his *Christusmythe* in 1909 the subject has been kept before the public by means of debates held in various places, particularly at some important university centers such as Jena, Marburg, Giessen, Leipzig, Berlin. In these debates Jesus' historicity has

this contention for a purely mythical Jesus will perhaps best be understood by observing some of its typical forms.

The late Albert Kalthoff, a pastor in Bremen and at one time president of the "Monistenbund," revived the views of Bauer with slight modifications. The distinctive feature of Kalthoff's view is his emphasis upon the social idea.[1] He reacts strongly against the individualism of modern Christianity, a feature in

been defended by various New Testament scholars of the first rank. A debate which attracted special attention was held at Berlin under the direction of the "Monistenbund" on the evenings of January 31 and February 1, 1910. Drews and von Soden led opposite sides of the discussion, of which the complete stenographic report is published as *Berliner Religionsgespräch: Hat Jesus gelebt?* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1910). The literature called forth by the general controversy is already large and is still increasing.

[1] *Das Christus-Problem: Grundlinien zu einer Sozialtheologie* (Leipzig, 1902, 1903[2]); *Die Entstehung des Christentums: Neue Beiträge zum Christusproblem* (Leipzig, 1904). Cf. the similar interest of Nieuwenhuis, *Das Leben Jesu: Eine historisch-kritische Abhandlung zur Aufklärung des arbeitenden Volkes* (Bielefeld, 1893), who thinks Jesus' existence may be questioned. Kalthoff's position was opposed, e.g., by Thikötter, *Kalthoffs Schrift "Das Christusproblem" beleuchtet* and *Dr. Kalthoffs Replik beleuchtet* (Bremen, 1903; cf. Kalthoff, *D. Thikötter und das Christusproblem: Eine Replik*, Bremen, 1903); Tschirn, *Hat Christus überhaupt gelebt?* (Bamberg, 1903); Bousset, *Was wissen wir von Jesus? Vorträge im Protestantenverein zu Bremen* (Halle, 1904; cf. Kalthoff, *Was wissen wir von Jesus? Eine Abrechnung mit Professor Bousset in Göttingen*, Berlin, 1904); Kapp, *Das Christus- und Christentumsproblem bei Kalthoff* (Strassburg, 1905); Titius, *Der Bremer Radikalismus* (Tübingen, 1908).

his opinion not to be found in the primitive form of this faith. Originally Christianity was purely a socio-religious or socio-ethical movement of the masses, and so free from individualism that the notion of a personal founder was itself wanting. An individual by the name of Jesus may have lived about the opening of our era, but he had no unique significance for the rise of the new religion. Not Judea but Rome was the seat of its origin; Jewish messianism, Stoic philosophy, and the communistic clubs of the time supplied its source elements; its literature was a poetic creation projecting into the past the more immediate experiences of the present, as when the picture of a suffering, dying, and rising Christ typified the community's own life of persecution and martyrdom. The gospel Jesus was created for practical purposes, thus giving a concrete and so a more permanent form to the principles and ideals of the new faith.[1]

[1] Socialists of Losinsky's type (cf. his *Waren die Urchristen wirklich Sozialisten?* Berlin, 1907) deny that Christianity has any significance for socialism; others hold more nearly to the views of Kalthoff, though their method of handling the alleged historical Jesus is not always quite so radical. For example, Kautsky, *Der Ursprung des Christentums* (Stuttgart, 1908), also "Jesus der Rebell" in *Die neue Zeit*, XXVIII (1910, 13–17, 44–52), treats the Christian literature with so free a hand as to make Jesus a

Other investigators draw more largely upon the religions of the ancient Orient for data to explain the rise of Christianity. As compared with the reconstructions of Bauer and Kalthoff, this method usually results in an earlier date and a different provenance for the origin of the new faith. While the representatives of the *religionsgeschichtliche* school are usually content with maintaining that the gospel accounts of Jesus are more or less heightened by the introduction of foreign elements,[1] many of its

political and social revolutionist, a typical "Marxist." For a reply to Kautsky see Windisch, *Der messianische Krieg und das Urchristentum* (Tübingen, 1909) and "Jesus ein Rebell?" in *Evangelisch-Sozial*, 1910, 33–44. Maurenbrecher, *Von Nazareth nach Golgatha: Eine Untersuchung über die weltgeschichtlichen Zusammenhänge des Urchristentums* (Schöneberg-Berlin, 1909) and *Von Jerusalem nach Rom: Weitere Untersuchungen über die weltgeschichtlichen Zusammenhänge des Urchristentums* (*ibid.*, 1910) takes the sources more seriously than Kautsky does, yet he assigns no very serious rôle to the historical Jesus as the founder of Christianity. He actually existed, for his life and death were the indispensable incentive for the new religion, but the real secret of its origin is the activity of the Son of Man myth which fixed itself upon the person of Jesus after his death, and in which the hopes of the common people found expression. Jesus had not put himself forward as Messiah. He had spoken of the Son of Man, whose coming he believed to be near at hand, only in the third person. Jesus was moved mainly by the proletarian instinct, which also dominated the thinking of the disciples. The giving of themselves to this ideal after Jesus' death was the birthday of Christianity.

[1] Cf. Clemen, *Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung des Neuen Testaments* (Giessen, 1909) for a convenient summary of the literature.

conclusions can readily be made to serve the interests of those who argue against Jesus' historicity. The entire New Testament representation of the life and thought of primitive Christianity becomes for these interpreters a congeries of ideas and practices borrowed from the ancient religions. This general principle for solving the problem is applied in several different ways.

J. M. Robertson, who writes in the interests of "naturalism" as against "credulity and organized ecclesiasticism," thinks to prove that the gospels' account of both the life and the teaching of Jesus is a composite of pagan myths.[1] Two lines of evidence for this conclusion are, (1) the character of the "Jesus" whom Paul knows, who is not a Jesus of action and teaching but a "speechless sacrifice"; and (2) the certainty with which everything in the gospels can be paralleled in pagan mythology. Constructively, the germ of Christianity may supposably be a primitive Semitic belief in a Palestinian Savior-Sun-God, Joshua the son of the mythical Miriam, that is, Jesus the son of

[1] *Christianity and Mythology* (London, 1900); German tr. of third part, *Die Evangelienmythen* (Jena, 1910); *A Short History of Christianity* (London, 1902); *Pagan Christs; Studies in Comparative Hierology* (London, 1903).

Mary. Thus Christianity is ultimately a primitive cult. Its "Jesus" may be a recollection of some vague figure such as Jesus ben Pandera of the Talmud, put to death for probably anti-Judaic teachings, and of whom the epistles of Paul preserve only the tradition of his crucifixion. But the more important part is played by the Joshua-Jesus god of the cult.[1]

Jensen determines more specifically than Robertson does the source from which the myth-making fancy of the gospel writers is thought to have taken its start. He holds that the careers of both Jesus and Paul, as recorded in the New Testament, are reproductions in variant form of the Babylonian legend of Gilgamesh. The proof for this position is found in a series of similarities in content and form which appear on comparing the Gilgamesh epic with the gospels and the Pauline epistles.[2] While Jensen, in his reply to Jülicher, protests

[1] This notion of a pre-Christian Jesus has been argued somewhat hesitatingly by Mead, and with strong conviction by W. B. Smith. It has been adopted also by Bolland, Drews, Niemojewski, and others.

[2] *Das Gilgamesch-Epos in der Weltliteratur* (Strassburg, 1906; see especially pp. 811–1030); *Moses, Jesus, Paulus: Drei Varianten des babylonischen Gottmenschen Gilgamesch* (Frankfurt, 1909); *Hat der Jesus der Evangelien wirklich gelebt? Eine Antwort an Prof. Dr. Jülicher* (Frankfurt, 1910; cf. Jülicher, *Hat Jesus gelebt? Vortrag gehalten zu Marburg am* 1. *März* 1910, Marburg, 1910.)

against being classed among those who deny absolutely the existence of a historical Jesus, his position is, in effect, the same as theirs. He says: "Of the career of the alleged founder of Christianity we know nothing, or at least as good as nothing," and "we serve in our cathedrals and houses of prayer, in our churches and schools, in palace and hut, a Babylonian god, Babylonian gods." All this is due to the remarkable vitality and perpetuative momentum of the Gilgamesh-story.

In Niemojewski's bulky volume astral mythology is made the main source of Christian origins.[1] This emphasis upon the astral origin of religious notions is a revival of Dupuis' views, recast under the influence of the modern school of Winckler.[2] Niemojewski finds that the New Testament writings are not altogether uniform in their representation of Jesus as a

[1] *Gott Jesus im Lichte fremder und eigener Forschungen samt Darstellung der evangelischen Astralstoffe, Astralscenen und Astralsysteme* (Munich, 1910; from the Polish *Bóg Jezus*, Warsaw, 1909). Cf. also Koch, *Die Sage von Jesus dem Sonnengott* (Berlin, 1911).

[2] In the realm of gospel study a novel product of the Winckler school may be seen in W. Erbt's *Das Marcusevangelium: Eine Untersuchung über die Form der Petruserinnerungen und die Geschichte der Urgemeinde* (Leipzig, 1911). Mark's story of Jesus' life is thought to be constructed on a solar scheme starting with December 22, when the sun turns again on its upward course in the heavens. Thus Jesus is depicted in the gospel as the *renewer*. The gospel falls into twenty-eight sections, each representing one

mythical personage, except in their consistent treatment of him as a deity. In the epistles he is nothing other than a variant of Osiris, Tammuz, Attis, Adonis. For Matthew he is the Sun-god. For Luke the supreme deity is the sun and his son is the moon. Again the Holy Spirit is the sun. Various gospel names and characters, as Arimathea, Cyrene, Galilee, Judea, have an astral significance; while Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, Herodias, Salome, are the counterparts respectively of the constellations Hydrus, Scorpio, Cassiopeia, Andromeda. The cross of Jesus is the Milky Way, the tree of the world.

Another school of writers finds the key to Christian origins in the activity of a primitive doctrine of "gnosis," or in some type of esoteric teaching fostered by secret cults, mysteries, and similar phenomena in the life of the ancient world. Mead[1] suggests that such movements

of the twelve months of the year—reckoning Jesus' ministry as two years and four months long—and each of these sections pictures Jesus in terms of ideas which the Babylonians connected with the respective months. Peter, it is held, was responsible for this arrangement of the calendar year. It was forsaken when James became head of the church, under whose leadership Christianity reverted to a more distinctly Jewish type of thought.

[1] *Did Jesus Live 100 B.C.?* (London and Benares, 1903); cf. the same author's *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* (London, 1900; German tr., *Fragmenten eines verschollenen Glaubens*, Berlin, 1902).

had already gained a footing within Judaism, prior to the Christian era. Indeed he questions the presence of any widespread orthodoxy in Judaism before the days of the Mishnaic rabbis. The seventy esoteric books of II Esd. 14:46 ff., which contain "the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the stream of knowledge," and which are to be delivered only to "the wise among the people," are thought to presuppose for an earlier date the existence of esotericists representing tendencies which may be traced in Essenism, Therapeutism, Philonism, Hermeticism, and Gnosticism. May not the origins of Christianity lie hidden among the pledged members of these mystic communities and ascetic orders? Mead feels himself compelled to ask this question because of (1) the impossibility of historical certainty regarding any objective fact in the traditional narratives of Jesus' career, (2) the silence of extra-Christian sources in the first century A.D., and (3) certain obscure data which seem absolutely contradictory to the current Christian tradition. These contradictory data, found mainly in the Talmud, the "Tol^{e}doth Jeshu," and Epiphanius, are thought to indicate that the Jesus of gospel tradition really lived about

100 B.C. He was not, however, a very significant personage for the origin of the new movement. Practically all that can be known of him historically is that he was a contemporary of Alexander Jannaeus, that he was called Jeshu[1] ben Pandera (and sometimes ben Stada), that he had spent some time in Egypt, and that he belonged to one of the secret communities from which he was expelled for teaching its wisdom to non-initiates. The new movement would probably never have arisen out of reverence for this historical person, since the basal thought of the new faith was the "drama of the Christ-mystery." In its literature Jesus appears merely as one of the characters for a "historical romance" into which allegories, parables, and actual mystery doings are woven, as was common in the methods of haggada and apocalyptic of that day. The "common document" of the gospels arose about 75 A.D., but our present gospels are second-century products.[2] Paul is a genuine historical character who

[1] The Talmud usually writes ישו when speaking of Jesus, in distinction from ישוע (Joshua), though the two names are originally the same in Hebrew.

[2] Cf. Mead, *The Gospels and the Gospel: A Study in the Most Recent Results of the Lower and the Higher Criticism* (London, 1902).

wrote the principal letters traditionally assigned to him, but he is fundamentally interested in the Christ-mystery, a gnostic type of faith. Moreover, when his letters are read aright they show that he was writing to communities which had existed before his day and were already familiar with gnostic nomenclature. Thus before Paul's time pre-Christian Christianity was in existence not only in Palestine but also in the Diaspora.

W. B. Smith likewise holds that Christianity arose out of a Jesus-cult existing in the first century B.C.[1] From the statement of Acts 18:25, that Apollos taught carefully "the things concerning Jesus knowing only the baptism of John," it is inferred that Apollos was not yet a "Christian," but that he was an enthusiastic missionary of the pre-Christian Jesus-sect, which at the time was particularly strong in Alexandria. But this cult was also strong in other centers, and Cyprus is thought to have been the place whence that form of the cult which came to be known as Christianity took its start. Yet it must not be said that Christianity arose from any one center; it was

[1] *Der vorchristliche Jesus* (Giessen, 1906, 1911[2]); *Ecce Deus: Die urchristliche Lehre des reingöttlichen Jesu* (Jena, 1911).

multifocal. The "things concerning Jesus" should not be understood, it is claimed, as information about the earthly career of a human Jesus, but as a doctrine about a divinity, a Savior-god. The characteristic feature of primitive Christianity, its fundamental essence, was its emphasis upon monotheism; the anthropomorphized Jesus-god of the New Testament writings is a secondary product. This monotheistic teaching was very timely. It answered to the broader outlook which the unification of empire under Alexander and under the Romans had brought about, and it also met the needs of the masses who longed for deliverance from the enslaving forces in the thought and life of their world. But this new teaching could not at first be openly propagated without incurring the danger of disastrous opposition, consequently the new religion appears first as a secret cult mediating to its initiates the knowledge of the true God. Now this search for knowledge of the highest God was virtually the problem of Gnosticism, accordingly many gnostic notions have contributed to the formation of the New Testament thought.

Bolland, professor of philosophy in Leiden, makes even more of gnostic speculation as a

factor in the rise of Christianity. Encouraged by his belief that Vatke by philosophical inquiry in 1835 really anticipated the outcome of later study upon the Pentateuch, Bolland thinks that he, by applying a similar type of Hegelian speculation to the problem of Christian origins, can pronounce the final word upon this subject. As a result of his "philosophievrij onderzoek," Christianity is found to be an evolution of Judeo-gnostic ideas starting from Alexandria and gradually spreading north and west. The Christian Jesus is merely an allegorical rehabilitation of the Old Testament Joshua,[1] the successor of Moses, who led the people into the land of promise. Hence the appropriateness of the Jesus-Joshua name, since both etymologically and traditionally it stands for God's salvation. The gospels, which announce the coming of the true Joshua, are a product of

[1] *Het eerste Evangelie in het Licht van Oude gegevens: Eene Bijdrage tot de Wordingsgeschiedenis des Christendoms* (Leiden, 1906); *De evangelische Jozua: Eene Poging tot Aanwijzing van den Oorsprong des Christendoms* (Leiden, 1907); 2d ed., *Het Evangelie: Eene "vernieuwde" Poging tot Aanwijzing van den Oorsprong des Christendoms* (*ibid.*, 1910). Also *Gnosis en Evangelie: Eene historische Studie* (1906); *Het Lijden en Sterven van Jezus Christus* (1907); *De Achtergrond der Evangelien: Eene Bijdrage tot de Kennis van de Wording des Christendoms* (1907). Cf. de Zwaan, "De Oorsprong des Christendoms volgens Prof. Bolland," *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, XLV (1911), 38–87, 119–78.

the allegorizing exegesis of Alexandria—purely a Jesus-romance. Traces of gnostic notions are discovered throughout the New Testament literature. In the gospels, for example, these appear in the parable of the sower, in Jesus' statement that God only is good, in the saying about truth revealed unto babes, in the confession of Peter, in the miracle narratives, and in the passion and resurrection stories. The earliest form of gospel tradition is to be seen in certain non-canonical fragments, particularly in the so-called Gospel of the Egyptians, an Alexandrian proto-Mark. This was later re-worked, perhaps in Rome, to produce the Judaistic Matthew, the Hellenistic Luke, the neutral and universalistic Mark. The Fourth Gospel represents a Samaritan form of Alexandrian Gnosticism, and was probably written at Ephesus. Paul's letters are all spurious and are products of clerical circles in Rome about 135 A.D. Here Bolland is in line with the extreme school of Dutch criticism, as represented for instance by Van Manen.[1]

[1] Whittaker (*The Origins of Christianity*, London, 1904, 1909[2]), adopting Van Manen's conclusions regarding the spuriousness of all the Pauline letters, pushes his doubts almost to the point of denying Jesus' existence. All the New Testament books are placed in the 2d century, following a period of oral myth-making

Lublinski, the late Weimar *Schriftsteller*, traces Christianity to an original pre-Christian gnostic sect,[1] but this sect was strictly Jewish and did not differentiate itself from Judaism until after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. According to Lublinski, gnostic tendencies must have been circulating in the Orient from the time of the Persian supremacy on, and the Jews cannot have escaped this influence. It pervaded the whole culture of the ancient world. With it came theosophy, mystery religion, secret cults, and the like. Its actual presence in Judaism is thought to be seen in such sects as the Essenes, the Therapeutes, the Gnostics of Justin, the Naassenes, and similar movements of which no records have been preserved. Of such an origin was Christianity. But gnostic thought could hardly concern itself primarily with a man-deity, Jesus; its first

in the 1st century. It was not until after the year 70 A.D. that the Christian movement began to appear, and at the same time the story of Jesus' life and death was formulated. Before that date it cannot be said that Christianity existed, except as a vague messianic movement associated with some obscure cult. Jesus may not be an entirely fictitious person, yet the gospel stories are almost wholly mythical.

[1] *Der urchristliche Erdkreis und sein Mythos:* I, *Die Entstehung des Christentums aus der antiken Kultur;* II, *Das werdende Dogma vom Leben Jesu* (Jena, 1910).

interest could only be in a divine nature, Christ. Hence the Jesus of gospel history and the story of his followers in the first century are creations of mythical fancy.

Drews has absorbed, perhaps more thoroughly than any of the other extremists, the main features of these radical positions.[1] The five theses which he presented for discussion at the Berlin conference are a very good epitome of his position:[2]

1. Before the Jesus of the gospels there existed already among Jewish sects a Jesus-god and a cult of this god which in all probability goes back to the Old Testament Joshua, and with this were blended on the one hand Jewish apocalyptic ideas and on the other the heathen notion of a dying and rising divine redeemer.

2. Paul, the oldest witness for Christianity, knows nothing of a "historical" Jesus. His incarnated Son of God is just that Jewish-heathen redeeming divinity Jesus whom Paul

[1] *Die Christusmythe* (Jena, 1909, 1910[3]; English tr., *The Christ Myth*, London and Chicago, 1911); *Die Christusmythe:* II. Teil, *Die Zeugnisse für die Geschichtlichkeit Jesu: Eine Antwort an die Schriftgelehrten mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der theologischen Methode* (Jena, 1911); cf. also *Die Petruslegende: Ein Beitrag zur Mythologie des Christentums* (Frankfurt, 1910).

[2] *Berliner Religionsgespräch*, p. 34.

merely set in the center of his religious world-view and elevated to a higher degree of religio-ethical reflection.

3. The gospels do not contain the history of an actual man, but only the myth of the god-man Jesus clothed in historical form, so that not only the Israelitish prophets along with the Old Testament types of the Messiah, a Moses, Elijah, Elisha, etc., but also certain mythical notions of the Jews' heathen neighbors concerning belief in the redeeming divinity made their contribution to the "history" of that Jesus.

4. With this method of explanation an "undiscoverable" remainder which cannot be derived from the sources indicated may still exist, yet this relates only to secondary and unimportant matters which do not affect the religious belief in Jesus; while on the contrary all that is important, religiously significant, and decisive in this faith, as the Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection of Jesus, is borrowed from the cult-symbolism of the mythical Jesus, and owes its origin not to a historical fact but to the pre-Christian belief in the Jewish-heathen redeeming divinity.

5. The "historical" Jesus, as determined by

the critical theology, is at any rate of so doubtful, intangible, and faded a form that faith in him cannot possibly longer be regarded as the indispensable condition of religious salvation.

Thus modern radical criticism sets up its mythical Christ over against the historical Jesus of liberal theology. While there is much variety in the details, the main outlines of the radicals' contention are clearly defined. They all agree in treating the evidence for a historical Jesus as wholly unreliable. This involves in most instances the hypothesis of a second-century date for the New Testament writings. Robertson, Mead, and Drews hold to the genuineness of the principal Pauline letters,[1] yet they so read them as to find there no proof for Jesus' existence. Much stress is usually placed upon the paucity of the non-Christian references to the new religion and its alleged founder in the first century A.D. On the positive side, a theory of Christianity's origin is constructed out of more obscure and remote data gleaned from the life and thought of the ancient world. Although at this point there are wide variations in the items chosen, the choice is

[1] W. B. Smith seems at present to be vacillating on this question; cf. *Ecce Deus*, p. 150.

regulated by a uniform principle, namely, ideas not persons are the significant factors in the origin of a religion. As a corollary of this principle, it follows that a Christ-idea, not a historical Jesus, is the primal formative element in the genesis of Christianity. Not only can any unique historical founder be dispensed with, but this possibility proves so alluring that his person is forthwith eliminated from the history. Consequently the liberal theologians' contention for the significance of Jesus, both as a figure in the past and for the thought of the present, seems to the radicals wholly fallacious.

Thus ultimately this problem, which appeared at first sight to be purely historical, a question of gathering data and testing their reliability, really involves the interpretation of the data in terms of presuppositions as to the nature of religious origins, and especially as to the nature of primitive Christianity. And these presuppositions are inseparably bound up with the question of what is vitally important for religion today. Not all writers of the radical school recognize this fact so clearly as does Drews—at least they rarely express themselves so clearly on this phase of the

subject. In closing the Berlin debate he asked two questions which he regards as fundamental: What is the secret of Christianity's origin in the light of which it can be revitalized for modern times? and What can Christ be to us today? His reply to both questions is an appeal for the recognition of the supreme significance of the Christ-myth. It is not a historical Jesus but Christ as an idea, an idea of the divine humanity, which explains the rise of Christianity and makes possible its modern revitalization. Furthermore, in his preface to the *Christusmythe* Drews declares that the book was written "directly in the interests of religion from the conviction that the forms hitherto prevailing are no longer sufficient for the present, that especially the 'Jesusism' of the modern theology is fundamentally irreligious and itself presents the greatest hindrance to all true religious progress."[1]

[1] Similarly in his second volume Drews emphasizes this idea: "Der Kampf um die Christusmythe ist zugleich ein Kampf um die Freiheit und Selbständigkeit des modernen Geisteslebens, um die Unabhängigkeit der Wissenschaft und Weltanschauung. . . . . Der Kampf um die 'Christusmythe' ist aber auch zugleich ein Kampf um die Religion. Alle Religion ist ein Leben aus den Tiefen des eigenen unmittelbaren Selbst heraus, ein Wirken im Geist und in der Freiheit. Aller religiöse Fortschritt vollzieht sich in der Verinnerlichung des Glaubens, in der Verlegung des

This opposition to the "theologians" sometimes induces a polemical tone which tends to obscure the main issues of the problem.[1] Argument is in danger of becoming mere special pleading for a "cause." It is an obvious fact that the champions of this modern radicalism have not approached their task as specialists in the field of early Christian history, nor are they thoroughly equipped to use the tools of that science. Not only so, but they deliberately discard those tools and condemn the methods of the historical theologian as unscientific, because he allows Jesus an especially significant place and refuses to push critical skepticism to what they regard the logical issue—that is, the denial of Jesus' existence. This animosity toward the theologian sometimes leads to a misunderstanding, or even to a misrepresentation, of his position. For example, Drews's fifth thesis implies a

Schwerpunktes des Seins aus der objektiven in die subjektive Welt, in der vertrauensvollen Hingabe an den Gott in uns (p. xviii f.; cf. Drews, *Die Religion als Selbst-Bewusstsein Gottes*, Jena, 1906).

[1] Cf. Steudel, *Wir Gelehrten vom Fach! Eine Streitschrift gegen Professor D. von Sodens "Hat Jesus gelebt?"* (Frankfurt, 1910), *Im Kampf um die Christusmythe. Eine Auseinandersetzung insbesondere mit J. Weiss, P. W. Schmiedel, A. Harnack, D. Chwolson* (Jena, 1910).

criticism of the "critical theology" which is hardly just, if the reference is to leading representatives of New Testament critical study in Germany. Nor is it true, as Drews again insinuates, that these scholars think religion today is to be explained and established "only through textual criticism in a philological way."[1] They hold neither that an accurate critical text, nor that faith in a "historical" Jesus, in the sense of accepting any given number of doctrines about him, constitutes the essentials of religion. It seems very evident, however, that one feature of the present radical movement, and one which looms large in the vision of many of its advocates, is a hatred for "theology" and the "theologians."[2] While this bitterness has, doubtless, been aggravated by the scathing denunciations which the radicals have sometimes received at the hands of their opponents, its fundamental ground is the question of what religious significance shall be attached to Jesus. The

[1] *Berliner Religionsgespräch*, pp. 93 f.

[2] Drews expresses his sentiments thus (parodying Luther):

"Und wenn die Welt voll T—heologen wär'
und wollt' uns gar verschlingen,
so fürchten wir uns nicht so sehr:
es soll uns *doch* gelingen!"

"mythologists" are determined that this shall be *nil*.

Under these circumstances our present task involves not only a critical estimate of the negative arguments, followed by a constructive statement of the extent and worth of the historical evidence for Jesus' existence, but also some consideration of his significance as a historical personage for the origin and perpetuation of our religion.

CHAPTER III

AN ESTIMATE OF THE NEGATIVE ARGUMENT: ITS TREATMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL EVIDENCE

Until recently the arguments of the extremists have been more generally ignored than criticized. Very little attention was paid to Bauer's work, Kalthoff's views were dismissed rather summarily by the world of New Testament scholarship, Robertson, Mead, Smith, and Jensen were hardly taken seriously, and a similar fate awaited others of like opinion until Drews appeared upon the scene. He has been more successful than his predecessors in arousing critical opposition, and this criticism has come from several scholars of first rank in the field of New Testament study. In view of this success Drews congratulates himself on having "hit the bull's-eye."

For the most part these refutations are in the form of published addresses or popular lectures, pointing out the defects of the radical position and restating the case for Jesus' historicity from the standpoint of modern critical scholarship. But these criticisms do not repre-

sent merely one phase or one school of modern thinking; they emanate from various sources. Even a Jewish rabbi has come forward in defense of Jesus' historical personality,[1] though Jewish interest in this subject would naturally not be great. Nor would it be strange if Roman Catholic scholars should dismiss this question, on which the authority of the church speaks so clearly, without serious discussion. Yet a work like that of Meffert[2] shows an appreciation of the problem and meets it strongly, from the Catholic point of view. The more conservative type of Protestant thought, represented for example by Dunkmann,[3] while sympathizing with the extremists' condemnation of the "liberal" interpretation of Jesus, stoutly maintains a historical basis for the Christ of faith. Even recent writers of the *religionsgeschichtliche* school are quite unwilling to carry skepticism to its extreme limit.[4]

[1] G. Klein, *Ist Jesus eine historische Persönlichkeit?* (Tübingen, 1910; from the Swedish, *Aer Jesus en historisk personlighet?* Stockholm, 1910).

[2] *Die geschichtliche Existenz Christi* (Munich, 1904, 1910[2]).

[3] *Der historische Jesus, der mythologische Christus und Jesus der Christ* (Leipzig, 1910).

[4] Cf. Zimmern, *Zum Streit um die "Christusmythe": Das babylonische Material in seinen Hauptpunkten dargestellt* (Berlin, 1910); Brückner, *Das fünfte Evangelium* (Tübingen, 1910); Jeremias, *Hat Jesus Christus gelebt?* (Leipzig, 1911).

As was to be expected, however, the chief opponents of the "mythologists" belong to the so-called liberal school of modern theology. Von Soden replied to Drews at the Berlin conference, and he also issued a small pamphlet[1] in which he sought to show the value of the Christian evidence and to exhibit the defects of the opponents' position. Jülicher's lecture,[2] though written with special reference to Jensen's radicalism, gives less attention to the views of opponents than to a positive statement of the reliability of Christian tradition. After defining the nature of "historical" proof, he dwells upon the worth of our sources of information and condemns Jensen's methods as erroneous scientifically. Especially noteworthy surveys of the radical movement as a whole are made by Weinel,[3] J. Weiss,[4] and

[1] *Hat Jesus gelebt? Aus den geschichtlichen Urkunden beantwortet* (Berlin, 1910).

[2] *Hat Jesus gelebt?* (Marburg, 1910).

[3] *Ist das "liberale" Jesusbild widerlegt? Eine Antwort an seine "positiven" und seine radikalen Gegner mit besonderer Rücksicht auf A. Drews, Die Christusmythe* (Tübingen, 1910; enlarged from the same author's "Ist unsere Verkündigung von Jesus unhaltbar geworden?" *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*, XX [1910], 1–38, 89–129).

[4] *Jesus von Nazareth, Mythus oder Geschichte? Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Kalthoff, Drews, Jensen* (Tübingen, 1910).

Clemen.[1] Each analyzes somewhat minutely the different phases of the problem, criticizing at length the radical position and setting over against it his own understanding of the valid elements of Christian tradition. Each author has his distinctive purpose, as the subtitles of the several books indicate, but the writers are in general agreement as to their main conclusions. They have handled the problem so candidly and thoroughly that the radicals can no longer justly complain of inattention.[2]

[1] *Der geschichtliche Jesus: Eine allgemeinverständliche Untersuchung der Frage: hat Jesus gelebt, und was wollte er?* (Giessen, 1911).

[2] Further defenses of Jesus' historicity, mostly in pamphlet form and from different points of view, are: Beth, *Hat Jesus gelebt?* (Berlin, 1910); Bornemann, *Jesus als Problem* (Frankfurt, 1909); Brephol, *Die Wahrheit über Jesus von Nazareth* (Berlin, 1911); Broecker, *Die Wahrheit über Jesus* (Hamburg, 1911); Carpenter, *The Historical Jesus and the Theological Christ* (London, 1911); Chwolson, *Ueber die Frage, ob Jesus gelebt hat* (Leipzig, 1910); Delbrück, *Hat Jesus Christus gelebt?* (Berlin, 1910); Dietze, *Kritische Bemerkungen zur neuesten Auflage von A. Drews, Christusmythe* (Bremen, 1910); Fiebig, *Jüdische Wundergeschichten des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters* (Tübingen, 1911); Grützmacher, *Jesusverehrung oder Christusglaube?* (Rostock, 1911); Hauck, *Hat Jesus gelebt?* (Berlin, 1910); Kühn, *Ist Christus eine geschichtliche Person?* (Halle a.S., 1910); Loisy, *À propos d'histoire des religions* (Paris, 1911; chap. v deals with the "Christmyth"); Rossington, *Did Jesus Really Live? A Reply to "The Christ Myth"* (London, 1911); Schmidt, F. J., *Der Christus des Glaubens und der Jesus der Geschichte* (Frankfurt, 1910); Valensin, *Jésus-Christ et l'étude comparée des religions* (Paris, 1911). Sur-

In forming an estimate of the value of the negative argument, there are two important questions which one may ask. Does it successfully dispose of the traditional evidence for the origin of Christianity? and, Does it substitute an adequate reconstruction of the history? Bruno Bauer, as we have already observed, was gradually led to his conclusions by his critical examination of the gospels and the Pauline epistles. Consequently the formulation of a new theory of Christian origins was the last stage in his work. Today this process is usually inverted. The radicals come to a study of the New Testament with a fixed notion of the way Christianity arose, hence they are not greatly concerned with the Christtian literature except to demonstrate that its content can be explained in accordance with their hypothesis. This method may be legiti-

veys of the literature are made by Bacon in the *Hibbert Journal*, IX (1911), 731–53; Case in the *American Journal of Theology*, XV (1911), 20–42; Dibelius in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1910, cols. 545–52, and 1911, cols. 135–40; Esser in the *Theologische Revue*, 1911, cols. 1–6 and 41–47; Loisy in the *Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuses* (nouvelle série), I (1910), 401–35; Mehlhorn, *Protestantische Monatshefte*, XIV (1910), 415–21 and XV (1911), 17–27; Muirhead, *Review of Theology and Philosophy*, VI (1911), 577–86 and 633–46; N. Schmidt, *Intern. Journal of Ethics*, XXII (1911), 19–39; Windisch, *Theologische Rundschau* XIII (1910), 163–82, 199–220, and XIV (1911), 114–37.

mate if it satisfies two conditions, namely, if it treats fairly the traditional evidence which it proposes to set aside, and if its constructive hypothesis is otherwise properly substantiated.

In the first place, is the explicit New Testament testimony to the existence of Jesus as a historical person adequately disposed of on the theory that he never lived at all? If he is not a historical character this supposed testimony to his existence is either fictitious or else it has commonly been misread. Appeal is sometimes made to each of these possibilities.

It has already been noted that several representatives of the modern radical movement think all the New Testament literature is spurious, a late product of theological and literary fancy. But the general arguments for this opinion are open to serious criticism. They commonly ignore, or unceremoniously dismiss, all external testimony for the early existence of the New Testament books. They lay great stress upon alleged parallelisms between Christianity and earlier or contemporary heathenism, inferring that this proves the secondary character of the Christian literature. But the mere fact of parallelism in even a large number of points can hardly prove more than the very

evident fact that the founders of Christianity were men of their own age. Furthermore this skill in discovering parallels often seems greatly overworked, while the distinctive features of Christianity are unduly minimized. Even if the New Testament writers sometimes used gnostic nomenclature, or appropriated ideas and terms familiar to the worshipers of Adonis, it is still perfectly clear that they purport to be preaching a *new* religion. No amount of parallelism, not even demonstrable "borrowing," disposes of the genuineness of these writings unless it can be demonstrated that the personal note contained in them is not genuine and that the idea of newness is itself fictitious. In general this radical rejection of the New Testament evidence seems to rest on unreliable grounds, and is not sufficiently thoroughgoing to touch the heart of the problem.

Especially important in this connection is the treatment of the Pauline letters. According to tradition they were written mostly in the sixth decade of the first century, and they are so definite in their reference to a historical Jesus that their spuriousness, either wholly or in part, is commonly admitted to be a necessary presupposition for the denial of Jesus' historicity.

Some would maintain that the whole Pauline section of the New Testament literature is a pseudepigraphic product. This theory is not of itself impossible, particularly for an age whose literary method was to set forth teaching under the authority of persons prominent in the past. The names of Moses, Enoch, Elijah, Isaiah, Daniel, were used in this way, so that prominent figures in early church history were quite naturally made to play a similar rôle. And since the Christians of the second and third centuries rejected some writings put forward under the name of Peter and of Paul, because the marks of pseudepigraphy seemed evident, it is certainly proper in the interests of accurate scholarship to ask whether those who made the canonical selection were sufficiently exact in distinguishing between the genuine and the spurious. The very fact that some pseudepigraphic writings are known to have been in circulation opens the way for the supposition that still more may have been of this character. Indeed present-day criticism of even the moderately conservative type has accustomed us to thinking of the so-called Pastoral Epistles, if not indeed of some other alleged Pauline letters, as belonging in this

class of literature. But if some letters are spurious, then may not all be so? The radicals not only admit this as a possibility but claim it as a probability.

From this conclusion it follows that this literature must have arisen at a time when the supposed Jesus and Paul belonged to so remote a past that there was little danger of any serious difficulty in accepting as real their assumed existence. It is true that among primitive peoples historical feeling is not exacting in its demands. The borderland between fancy and fact is often vague, so perhaps the lapse of only a few decades would make the launching of this fiction possible. Yet it can hardly have been successfully accomplished among men who personally knew the times and places in which these fictitious characters were assumed to have lived. Therefore these letters, if not genuine, must be, at the earliest, second-century products.

But when one examines the argument for the spuriousness and the late dating of the letters, he finds that it amounts to little more than an assertion of skepticism, which on being repeated by its advocates is too easily given the credentials of a demonstration. In all

fairness to the modern radical movement it may be said that its exponents have presented no thoroughgoing argument for the spuriousness of all the Pauline letters. Bauer's results are referred to occasionally, and the negative position of the Dutch school represented more recently by Van Manen, or the skepticism of Steck, is sometimes cited in this connection. But all of these positions certainly need at least to be revised and supplemented before the world of historical scholarship can be expected to treat them seriously. Jensen's attempt to derive the Pauline literature from the Gilgamesh legend and W. B. Smith's criticism of Romans are similarly unsatisfactory. Jensen's treatment is only incidental to his discussion of the gospels, and Smith's conclusions have not only suffered severely under the criticism of Schmiedel, but, if valid, scarcely touch the main problem. When reduced to its lowest terms, the argument for the spuriousness of all the Pauline writings seems to be chiefly a refusal to treat seriously the probability of genuineness in the case of any one of these letters. Thus an attempt is made to throw the whole burden of proof upon the one who entertains the more usual opinion that the

chief epistles of Paul are historical documents of first importance. It is fair enough to demand that one justify his belief in the genuineness of these letters, but it is equally fair to point out that the bald assertion of disbelief is not an adequate argument for spuriousness.

A second type of this general skepticism admits the reality of Paul as an important individual for the founding of the new religion, but holds that his letters in their present form are the result of considerable reworking on the part of later Christians. Drews in particular would save Paul in so far as the latter can be cited as the exponent of a religion built upon faith in an idea—the item which Drews regards as central in all religion. As might be expected, the fundamental problems of Pauline study are scarcely touched and no fixed principles of critical investigation are followed. One takes from the literature what he pleases and leaves what he pleases. We are told at the start that no compelling proof for the authenticity of any of the letters can be produced, and yet from them a somewhat elaborate and confident exposition of alleged Pauline thought is derived. Anything in these writings supposedly pointing to the historicity of Jesus is explained other-

wise, or is called a later insertion. Finally it is asserted that "the Pauline letters contain no compulsion of any sort for the supposition of a historical Jesus, and no man would be likely to find such there if it were not already for him an established assumption."

At once several familiar passages demand explanation. For instance I Cor. 11:23ff., describing the last supper on the night of Jesus' betrayal, seems to point very clearly to a specific event in the life of a historical individual. This difficulty is avoided by assuming that "we have here to do with a clearly later insertion," at least the reference to the betrayal is "certainly inserted." Similarly the implication of a historical Jesus in I Cor. 15:5ff. is either another interpolation, or else these experiences are purely ecstatic in character and do not imply, as is commonly supposed, any thought of a definite historical person whose death preceded these unusual manifestations.[1] It is a convenient elasticity of critical method which can allow these options. Again, the men-

[1] Similarly Steudel, speaking of these and kindred passages says: "Wenn diese Stellen *nicht* eingeschoben sind, dann gibt es im Alten und Neuen Testament überhaupt keine Interpolate."—*Wir Gelehrten vom Fach!* p. 65. W. B. Smith also falls into line here (*Ecce Deus*, pp. 148 ff.).

tion of "brothers" of the Lord, as in I Cor. 9:5 and Gal. 1:19, is to be understood in the sense of community brotherhood. Yet we are not told why Paul in the same context should not have included Peter and Barnabas in this brotherhood. Moreover brothers *in* the Lord, not brothers *of* the Lord, is Paul's mode of thought for the community relationship. These are typical examples of both the brevity and the method Drews uses in disposing of the Pauline evidence. It is difficult to take arguments of this sort seriously, particularly when they are presented so briefly and with no apparent ground of justification except the presupposition that a historical Jesus must not be recognized.

The gospel evidence is disposed of in a similar manner. To take Drews's method as a sample of the radical treatment, the earliest external testimony to the gospels' origin is set aside on the ground of Eusebius' "notorious unreliability." Upon the fact, now widely recognized, that the evangelists combined interpretation with historical narrative, is based the broad generalization that all is fiction. The efforts of critical study to determine more accurately the real historical background are

characterized as a "half comic, half sad performance" and a "horrible fiasco." Yet apparently without any suspicion of the comic, we are asked to believe that so matter-of-fact a circumstance as Jesus' association with his disciples is merely a variation of the myth about Jason's search for the golden fleece.

Drews's handling of the gospel evidence is fairly representative of the radicals' general method. The more substantial results of the modern critical school of gospel study are not recognized as having any value. All emphasis falls upon the negative aspects of this work, and its most extreme negative conclusions are constantly set in the foreground. Much is made of the critics' disagreement on questions of detail, and of their inability to fix upon a definite quantum of information, no item of which could conceivably be questioned. We are often reminded of the fact that none of our gospels belong to Jesus' own generation, that they are all admittedly more or less interested in expounding Christian doctrine, and that many of their ideas may quite likely be colored by current Jewish or heathen notions. But what would all this prove? The immediate conclusion can hardly be, as the radicals would

contend, that there was no historical person Jesus. The only warranted inference would be that the preachers of the second and third generations of Christians were primarily interested in producing edifying narrative about Jesus. For example if it were proved beyond question that the disciples' interpretation of his death was phrased in terms of heathen notions about the saving value of the death of an imaginary savior-deity, it would by no means follow as a logical imperative that Jesus' alleged death is fictitious. In fact the logical inference would seem to be that memory of his actual death was a necessary incentive for the new form of interpretation.

The defectiveness of this treatment of the traditional evidence is perhaps not so patent in the case of the gospels as it is in the case of the Pauline epistles. Yet fundamentally it is the same. There is the same easy dismissal of all external testimony, the same disdain for the saner conclusions of modern criticism, the same inclination to attach most value to extremes of criticism, the same neglect of all the personal and natural features of the narrative, the same disposition to put skepticism forward in the garb of valid demon-

stration, and the same ever present predisposition against recognizing any evidence for Jesus' actual existence.

While these criticisms apply to the extremists in general, there is a distinctiveness about Jensen's method which in a certain sense puts it in a class by itself. For most of the modern radicals the question of eliminating the gospel evidence is one of secondary importance in comparison with the defence of their theory of Christian origins. This is not so true of Jensen. At least whatever his ultimate interest may be, his argument concerns itself primarily with the gospel materials. Moreover his explanation of the gospels' origin, as a phase of the modern skeptical movement, stands in a somewhat isolated position. While he is approvingly referred to as an example of skepticism, his results have not been incorporated at all extensively into the work of the later representatives of this school. For these reasons his views call for a separate examination.

His theory of gospel origins is that these writings are merely literary imitations of the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic. This is thought to be proved by the discovery of a series of parallels between the incidents of the gospel

narrative and the Gilgamesh story. Agreements are found not alone in individual items but also in the successive arrangement of the events. On this latter point the author places much emphasis. Hence the force of his argument can be estimated best by citing a section of the most important parallels, preserving the order of incidents as arranged by the author:[1]

1. At the beginning of the Gilgamesh legend Eabani was created by a miracle at the command of the gods.	At the beginning of the Jesus story John was produced by a miracle in accordance with an announcement by an angel.
2. Eabani lived far from men in the steppe (wilderness).	John lived in the steppe (wilderness) near the Jordan.
3. Eabani (is hairy and) has long hair on his head. Presumably he is clad with skins.	John, as a Nazirite, wears his hair uncut and long. He is clad with a garment of camel's hair and girded with a belt of leather or skin.
4. Eabani lives as the beasts of the steppe (wilderness) on grass and herbs and water.	John lives on what is to be found in the wilderness: on grasshoppers and wild honey, and, like a Nazirite, drinks no wine.
5. Gilgamesh dreams of a star resembling a host of the heavenly Lord who is stronger than he, then of a man (human being), and this star, as well as the man, is symbolic of Eabani who thereupon comes immediately to Gilgamesh.	John knows (by revelation) and prophesies of Jesus' coming as the coming of a man who is stronger than he, and soon afterward this Jesus comes to John.

[1] *Moses, Jesus, Paulus*, pp. 27–30.

6. To all appearances Eabani afterward flees into the steppe (wilderness).	Jesus afterward flees into the wilderness.
7. The sun-god calls from heaven to Eabani in the steppe (wilderness) with kind words and speaks to him of delicious food or loaves and of the kissing of his feet by the kings of the earth.	Immediately before his flight into the wilderness the spirit of God descends from heaven upon Jesus and a voice from heaven calls him God's beloved Son. In the wilderness, moreover, someone (i.e., the devil) speaks with Jesus about bread (which Jesus should make from stones) and about the fact that Jesus should rule all kingdoms of the earth if he kissed the devil's feet.
8. Eabani returns from the steppe (wilderness) to his abode, the home of Gilgamesh.	Jesus returns from the wilderness to his native place.
9. The dominion of [the great serpent and] the great lion is conquered by a god who comes down on a cloud (?) to whom the dominion of the world is to be transferred.	The kingdom of heaven and of God is near, which is to be introduced by Jesus' coming on the clouds.
10. [Conquest of the great serpent.]	Expulsion of the demon in the synagogue at Capernaum.
11. A fever plague, Xisuthros intercedes for plagued humanity and in this way probably the plague was brought to an end.	Peter's mother-in-law is sick with fever and Jesus makes her well.
12. Xisuthros builds himself a ship and keeps it ready.	A boat is kept ready for Jesus.
13. On an evening Xisuthros, with his family and his nearest friends, enters the ship.	On an evening Jesus with his disciples enters the boat.
14. A storm arises and ceases.	A storm arises and ceases.

15. Xisuthros lands with his family far from his abode.	Jesus lands in Perea opposite his native place.
16. Sinful humanity and most beasts, among them also the swine, are drowned in the flood.	Two thousand or more demons, and two thousand swine, are drowned in the sea over which Jesus went.
17. On a seventh day, after an interview with three intimate persons, Xisuthros comes to the top of the high mountain of the deluge and then is deified.	After six or eight days, thus certainly originally after a week of seven days, Jesus with three most intimate persons went on to a high mountain and was glorified and called God's Son.
18. The voice of the invisible Xisuthros out of the air to his ship companions says: You are to be pious.	The voice out of the cloud on the mountain of transfiguration says: You are to hear Jesus.
19. Chumbaba adventure.	[Apparently omitted but is in a new place.]
20. Gilgamesh reproaches Ishtar for her love affairs and the evils she has done her lovers.	John blames Herod for having married his second wife, Herodias, and for his evil deeds.
21. The bull adventure.	[Apparently omitted but is in quite a new place.]
22. Eabani dies.	John the Baptist dies (at a corresponding place in the story).

. . . . . .

And so on until the end of Jesus' career is reached.

39. [Gilgamesh dies.]	Jesus dies.

It is evident that no importance can be attached to any likeness between individuals. At first John is Eabani, then he becomes

Gilgamesh and Jesus is Eabani (No. 5), then Jesus becomes Xisuthros (Nos. 11–17), then Xisuthros is God (No. 18). When John reproves Herod he is Gilgamesh (No. 20), but when he dies in consequence of this boldness he is Eabani (No. 22). In the uncited parallels which follow there is the same confusion: when Jesus starts across the lake with the disciples he is Gilgamesh; when the storm arises he is Xisuthros; again, Gilgamesh represents the rich young ruler, but in the immediately following incident he represents Jesus' disciples; Jesus is Xisuthros when he gives the loaves to the disciples and they are Gilgamesh, but in the very next parallel Jesus is again Gilgamesh; then Jesus is Xisuthros and Peter is Gilgamesh, though immediately afterward the rich man in hell is Gilgamesh and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom is Eabani, notwithstanding the correspondence between Eabani and John the Baptist at the time of the latter's death. It cannot be said that the life-story of any hero in the Babylonian legend parallels that of any New Testament character, and indeed, so far as the support of the argument is concerned, the proper names may as well be struck from the list.

As to the resemblance between individual events, it is insignificant and often trifling in content; for example, two characters are alike in that each is in the wilderness—among orientals a natural place for meditation; one has a hairy body, the other wears a garment made of hair; one eats grass, the other eats grasshoppers; and, finally, both die—hardly a remarkable fact when there is no resemblance in the circumstances attending their deaths. But what of the alleged "essentially similar *succession* of events"? This is not true of persons with whom the action is associated, for, as already observed, first one person and then another is introduced without regard to orderly procedure. Moreover, it is not true that the action, as arranged in these parallels, preserves the order of events in the gospels. The reference to Jesus' coming on the clouds (No. 9) appears in the gospels not at the beginning of Jesus' preaching but toward the close. The connection between holding a boat ready (No. 12) and entering the boat (No. 13) is a misrepresentation of the gospel narrative. Xisuthros enters the ship that he prepares and holds in readiness, but the occasion on which a boat is held ready for Jesus (Mark 3:9) is

entirely different from that on which he enters a boat to go across the lake (Mark 4:35), and an important part of his work in Galilee is done in the meantime. It is exceptionally irregular to place the transfiguration in connection with the story of the Gadarene demoniacs (Nos. 16–18). According to the gospel order a wide gap intervenes in which belong several incidents mentioned later in Jensen's series. Again, the order of Mark is violated when Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler is placed before Jesus' reference to the "loaves"; and the order of Luke suffers when the story of the rich young ruler is put before the parable of the rich man in hades.

The alleged points of likeness are even more insignificant when one views them in their original contexts. It is only by a generous omission of the main features of the narrative that a theory of resemblance can be made even plausible. To take a single illustration, the gospel story of Jesus' baptism and temptation tells of an individual with a new consciousness of his mission in life reflecting in solitude upon the means he will use for its accomplishment. Though he is hungry and has power to turn stones into bread, he will not, for God is more

to him than bread; nor will he ask God to show him favoritism either in the display of unusual acts or in the granting of earthly dominion. These are all inferior motives—temptations of Satan—in contrast with the ideal of perfect submission to the will of God. On the other hand, the portion of the Babylonian legend, of which the gospel narrative is supposed to be a reproduction, pictures Eabani as a wild creature sporting with the beasts and protecting them from the hunter. The latter complains to Gilgamesh, the ruler of the city of Erech, who promises to lure Eabani away by means of a prostitute. The plan succeeds and finally Eabani is persuaded to enter the city and live in friendship with Gilgamesh. Later (lacunae in the records leave the exact connection uncertain) follows the so-called temptation parallel, which, however, is no temptation at all but a speech of comfort and exhortation from Shamash the sun-god. Eabani is evidently restive under the restraints of civilization, and Shamash says, in effect, Why, Eabani, do you long for the harlot, the prostitute? Have you not been supplied with food and clothing at the court of Gilgamesh who will allow you to sit on an easy seat at his right hand

and the kings of the earth will kiss your feet? And when the dawn of morning broke "the words of Shamash, the mighty, loosened the bands of Eabani and his furious heart came to rest." These narratives certainly have no essential feature in common, and a theory of the derivation of the gospel story from the Babylonian, when the argument rests wholly on internal resemblance, is nothing less than absurd.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of this whole theory lies in its omissions. Large sections of both the gospel history and the Babylonian epic have to be suppressed in order to establish even the faintest semblance of parallelism. Practically all of Jesus' teaching is overlooked and his career taken as a whole has no counterpart in the epic. There is no character there whose religious ideas, whose inner experiences, whose motives and impulses, whose attitude toward men and God, and whose relations in life have the least resemblance to these traits in the gospel picture of Jesus. In no respect does Jensen's hypothesis, as a theory to explain the origin of the gospels without reference to a historical Jesus, seem to have any validity.

When once the gospels and the Pauline

epistles have been disposed of, the remaining traditional evidence for Jesus' existence is easily dismissed by similar methods. The Book of Acts readily takes its place with the gospels and the writings of Paul, while other New Testament books are said either to know no historical Jesus, or to contain only spurious references to him. The testimony furnished by the Apostolic Fathers is similarly estimated as of no account. To be sure, critical historians quite generally admit that Josephus' principal reference to Jesus is unauthentic. The very language used—the implication of Jesus' divinity, reference to his miracles, recognition of his messiahship, etc.[1]—seems to mark the material as a Christian interpolation. It is also true that Roman history yields no important data until the second century A.D., and even then the evidence is of a meager sort. Suetonius and Pliny mention Christians, but their words shed no valuable light upon the problem of Jesus' actual existence. Tacitus, however, explicitly states that the Christians of Nero's day traced their origin to one named Christ

[1] *Ant.*, XVIII, iii, 3. The reference to James, "the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ" (*Ant.*, XX, ix, 1) is perhaps less open to doubt. See below, chap. viii.

who was put to death by Pontius Pilate in Judea during the reign of Tiberius. This is damaging testimony for the radical position, but its force is avoided in the usual way: either Tacitus is merely reporting from hearsay a fictitious Christian tradition, or the paragraph is a "Christian" interpolation.[1] Neither explanation is satisfactory. The first certainly has no value until the Christian tradition has been shown to be fictitious; and as for the second, the very language of the paragraph, which certainly is not Christian in its point of view,[2] testifies to the contrary.

We need not dwell longer upon the negative treatment of the traditional evidence for Jesus'

[1] This view is mainly a reiteration of the doubts of Hochart, *Études au sujet de la persécution des Chrétiens sous Néron* (Paris, 1885).

[2] *Annals*, XV, 44, cf. especially the clause describing the early spread of Christianity after Jesus' death: "repressaque in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursum erumpebat non modo per Judaeam, originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque." Of course it may be urged that this only shows good historical perspective on the part of the artist interpolator. But that would imply that his main object was to testify to the bare statement of Jesus' human existence. In other words, it must be assumed that the modern radicals' problem was the supposed interpolator's problem—a manifest begging of the question. It is evident from the passage in Josephus that the Christian interpolator's interest was "theological" rather than "historical."

historicity. Occasional monographs on special topics, like Drews's *Petruslegende* and W. B. Smith's "Judas Iscariot,"[1] illustrate the detailed application of the negative arguments, without, however, strengthening our estimate of their worth. Taken altogether, they signally fail in their proposed disposition of the evidence which has usually been regarded as establishing belief in the historical reality of Jesus. If the possibility of his non-historicity is to be entertained at all it must be brought about by reconstructing, without reference to him, so strong a theory of Christian origins that the traditional view will pale before it as a lesser light in the presence of a greater luminary. Will the radicals' constructive hypothesis stand this test?

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, IX, 3 (April, 1911), 529–44; reproduced in *Ecce Deus*, pp. 295 ff.

CHAPTER IV

AN ESTIMATE OF THE NEGATIVE ARGUMENT: ITS PROPOSED EXPLANATION OF THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY

Most proposed reconstructions of Christian origins make the idea of salvation the basal thought of the new religion. The validity of this assumption can scarcely be doubted. Christianity from the beginning was unquestionably and pre-eminently a religion of salvation—a salvation which is primarily of divine origin and which is revealed and mediated in the career of a Jesus who thereby becomes the unique object of men's faith and reverence. These are essential items in Christian thinking at a very early date.

What is the incentive which starts this new religion on its way? This is the question on which opinion divides. Usually it has been supposed that a unique historical personality, known in tradition as Jesus of Nazareth, made so strong an impression upon men that a new faith reared itself about his person. The critics whose views we are investigating propose a very different answer. They think it

absurd to imagine that any historical individual could be given so elevated a position in the thought of men with whom he had been personally associated. His supposed historical form is merely a fanciful portrait giving a concrete setting to the abstract notion that salvation is the outcome of the deity's own activity. Thus the modern radicals hypostatize the salvation-idea, making it of itself the creative force in the genesis of the new religion. The problem of Christianity's origin then becomes the question, How did this conception come into being, and where and when are its earliest "Christian" manifestations to be found?

Bauer and Kalthoff, it will be remembered, looked for the answer to these questions in the Graeco-Roman life of the first and second centuries A.D. Their solution is now generally discarded even by the radicals, who admit that in the third century Christianity is too strongly entrenched in the Roman empire to bring the date of its origin down as late as Bauer and Kalthoff proposed. Moreover the Jewish background of the new religion is too evident to permit of so unconditional a transfer of its birthplace to heathen soil. The solution more commonly offered nowadays finds the primitive

Christians' doctrine of salvation to be less a product of their own experience and more a loan from the contemporary heathen religions. It is pointed out that belief in a redeeming divinity was current at an early date and had found expression in nature myths, in the tenets and practices of secret cults, and in gnostic speculations. Christianity represents the result of a borrowing and recasting of this fundamental conception. The beginnings of the process can no longer be traced with certainty, but they are assigned with confidence to pre-Christian times. This evolution went on both in Palestine and in Hellenistic Judaism, and attained the status of an independent religion at about the time Christianity is traditionally said to have come into existence. Such, in outline, is the radicals' understanding of Christianity's origin.

If the kernel of Christianity, the salvation-idea, was thus merely a notion borrowed from the ancient faiths, why did it create for itself a new divinity in the person of Jesus, and whence did it derive its unique vitality? These would seem to be crucial questions for the radicals' constructive hypothesis to answer.

Bauer and Kalthoff attempted to meet

similar problems by depicting a new set of human experiences as the source of Christianity's new thought and power. A new type of experience called forth the Jesus-portrait, while the timely elements incorporated in the picture assured his prestige. The later representatives of the radical school do not entirely discard this line of thought, though they find these new experiences to be the product of a different set of surroundings. The struggle of ideas in the life and culture of the ancient world are held to have made important contributions to nascent Christianity. Indeed, its success is ascribed in no small degree to its fortunate practice of gathering to itself the best elements in the thought of the time, yet fundamental to all this is the notion of a redeeming savior-god, Jesus. He is not the product of this experience; belief in him was anterior to, and was the norm for determining the interpretation of, these new experiences, according to the more recent theory of Christian origins.

But if Jesus' career is mainly a replica, so to speak, of the career of Adonis-Attis-etc., why was his figure created? Why posit a new god to embody an old idea? The radicals are now meeting this question by asserting that Jesus is

not a new god. Just as the various peoples of the Orient were wont to rebaptize old divinities with new or reconstructed attributes, so the Christian Jesus is merely a rehabilitation of Joshua, who is said to be originally the deified personification of the salvation-concept of the Hebrews. By thus admitting a substantial Jewish basis for the new religion, our question as to why Christian thought did not revolve about the person of some heathen deity is answered.

This Jesus-divinity accordingly antedates the Jesus of the gospels, and supplants him as the concrete focus about which that type of thinking, ultimately denominated "Christianity," first gathers. Here our second question, regarding the secret of the new religion's vitality, also would seem to find its answer. To insure effectiveness for the salvation-idea it must be attached to the career of a person. In other words it must be dramatized, even though the *dramatis persona* be a fictitious character. As evidence of this demand for personification, one may point to the figure of Adonis among the Syrians, Attis among the Phrygians, the Persian Mithra, the Babylonian Tammuz, the Egyptian Osiris. When the historical

Jesus, who is usually supposed to have played this rôle for Christians, disappears, his place is filled by this fictitious Joshua-Jesus character whose personality, it is maintained, supplies the vitalizing element for the primitive Christian faith. And by a happy combination, in this idealized person, of the best elements of Jewish as well as heathen thought, he thus becomes a uniquely powerful centrifugal force not only in the genesis but also in the expansion of the new religion, even though this new movement early grew to be a competitor in the same field with its assumed ancestral kinsmen.

Thus this pre-Christian Jesus-divinity is a figure of great importance for the modern radicals. It is true that not all writers of this school place equal stress upon his importance, for they do not all give equal attention to the minuter problems pertaining to a constructive theory of Christian origins. But just in proportion as they overlook him do they fail to make any serious attempt to show why primitive Christianity was so characteristically a religion of faith in Jesus the Messiah, while they also fail to supply in any plausible way a concrete initial force for the origin of the new religion. Nor do they provide any vital focus,

even theoretically, for the distinctive thought of early Christianity.

But what if it should turn out upon investigation that the doctrine of a pre-Christian Jesus-divinity never had any vogue in ancient times! Can the historicity of this belief be demonstrated? Or is the doctrine created by the modern skeptics in their search for a personal substitute—and most of them are now taking their problem seriously enough to realize the need of this personal substitute—for the alleged Jesus of gospel history? We shall not pronounce upon this question without a careful examination of the data. Therefore we present with some minuteness the supposed evidence for a primitive belief in a pre-Christian Jesus.

To begin with, there is no gainsaying the fact that the word "Jesus" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "Joshua." But this coincidence cannot of itself establish any connection between these individuals. If other men did not bear the same name the case might be different, but the name is a very common one among the Jews. According to Weinel,[1] it belongs to no less than twenty different persons in Josephus' narrative alone. Proof for the

[1] *Ist das "liberale" Jesusbild widerlegt?* p. 92.

contention that Jesus is the perpetuation of a Joshua-deity needs a more substantial basis than the mere identity of names. As a further argument it is urged, by Drews for example, that Joshua was a cult-god, and that the points of resemblance between his career and the life of Jesus, portrayed in the gospels, establish the identity of the two as originally a Jewish divinity. To illustrate, each name signifies "deliverer," "savior"; Joshua's mother (according to an Arabic tradition!) was Miriam, and the mother of Jesus was Mary (Miriam); Joshua led Israel out of distress in the wilderness into the land of promise where milk and honey flowed, that is, the land of the Milky Way and the moon, and Jesus also led his followers into the heavenly kingdom. All this is in turn traceable to an ancient cult of the sun, the Greek legend of Jason forming the connecting link. Jason = Joshua = Jesus. Jesus with his twelve disciples passing through Galilee came to the Passover feast at Jerusalem, Joshua with his twelve helpers passed through the Jordan and offered the Paschal lamb on the other shore, Jason with his twelve companions went after the golden fleece of the lamb, and all originally was the myth of the sun's wandering

through the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Thus Joshua-Jesus was an old Ephraimitish god of the sun and of fertility, worshiped among many Jewish sects as the hero-deliverer of ancient Israel and the future messianic savior.

This is a bold reconstruction, but it is fatally weak at some essential points. When one asks for explicit evidence of a Joshua-cult among the Jews he finds no answer. Again, is there anywhere in Judaism a clear intimation that Joshua was the hero about whom messianic hopes centered? Here also evidence fails. And as for resemblances between the Jesus of the gospels and this alleged cult-god, Joshua, they do not touch the main features in the career of either personage. Take even the notion of the death and resurrection of a savior-god, which is the item so much emphasized by the radicals, and there is no parallel in this respect between Joshua and Jesus. In fact the only real link between them is the identity of name, a feature of no consequence as we have already observed, when one recalls the frequency of this name among the Jews.

The most explicit statement that Jesus belongs to pre-Christian times is found in Epiphanius, and is corroborated by the Baby-

lonian Talmud. Epiphanius, arguing that the high-priestly office in the church is in the line of direct succession from David,[1] sees a prophetic significance in such scriptures as Ps. 132:11 f. and Gen. 49:10, which affirm that David's seed should continue to occupy his throne, and the scepter should not depart from Israel, until that final successor of David, in whom the people's hopes were to find consummation, should appear. On this basis Epiphanius interprets history as follows:[2]

The priesthood in the holy church is David's throne and kingly seat, for the Lord joined together and gave to his holy church both the kingly and the high-priestly dignity, transferring to it the never-failing [μὴ διαλείποντα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα] throne of David. For David's throne endured in line of succession until the time of Christ himself, rulers from Judah not failing until he came "to whom the things kept in reserve belonged. And he was the expectation of the gentiles." With the advent of the Christ the rulers in line of succession from Judah, reigning until the time of the Christ himself, ceased. For the line fell away and stopped from the time when he was born in Bethlehem of Judea under Alexander, who was of priestly and royal race. From Alexander on this office ceased—from the days of Alexander and Salina, who is also

[1] Cf. a similar interest in Justin, *Dial.*, LII, 3.

[2] *Haer.*, XXIX, 3. Cf. LI, 22 ff.

called Alexandra, to the days of Herod the king and Augustus the Roman emperor.

After remarking upon the fact that Alexander was both king and high priest, Epiphanius continues:

> Then afterward a foreign king, Herod, and no longer those who were of the family of David, put on the crown; while in Christ the kingly seat passed over to the church, the kingly dignity being transferred from the fleshly house of Judah and Jerusalem; and the throne is set up in the holy church of God forever, having a double dignity because of both its kingly and its high-priestly character.

In this argument Epiphanius' chief interest clearly is dogmatical rather than historical. Thinking, as he does, that Alexander Jannaeus (104–78 B.C.) was the last of the Jewish kings to combine in one person the offices of both king and high priest, he is led by his Old Testament proof-texts to assume that Jesus was the immediate successor of Alexander. Then Jesus must have been born during Alexander's reign.[1] This is the logic of dogma. But with magnificent inconsistency Epiphanius returns to history and speaks of a gap extending from the time of Alexander to the time of Herod. Why

[1] Cf. the anachronism of Justin, *Apol.*, I, 31, making Herod and Ptolemy Philadelphus contemporary.

mention an interim whose ulterior limit is fixed by the names of Herod and Augustus? Doubtless because this limit marks the actual appearance of Jesus upon the scene, as Epiphanius is well aware. Indeed he is very emphatic in affirming that Jesus was born in the forty-second year of Augustus' reign.[1] By forcing Epiphanius to read us a new lesson in history, when he is primarily concerned to prove the kingly and high-priestly inheritance of the church in an unbroken succession from David, we do him a great injustice. We should remember that the major premise of his thinking is that no word of Scripture fails.[2] It is not at all improbable that he was well aware of the contradiction involved in placing Christ's birth in the time of Alexander—his language does not imply that he held any doctrine about the "hiding" of the Messiah—but he took refuge in the pious reflection that Scripture might be enigmatical but could not be erroneous.[3] Yet his inconsistency ought not to cause serious trouble for moderns, who

[1] *Haer.*, LI, 22. Epiphanius apparently reckons the beginning of Augustus' reign from Julius Caesar's death in 44 B.C.

[2] *οὐδεμία γὰρ λέξις τῆς ἁγίας τοῦ θεοῦ γραφῆς διαπίπτει.*

[3] *οὐ γὰρ διήμαρτέ τι τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς ἁγίας γραφῆς αἰνιγμάτων.*

have discarded the ancient custom of using assumed Old Testament predictions as source materials for the writing of later history. Epiphanius clearly was trapped by the logic of his dogmatic into suggesting that Jesus was born under Alexander.

The Babylonian Talmud twice narrates the story of a certain Jeshu who lived in the days of King Jannaeus, and who is said to have practiced magic, and corrupted and misled Israel.[1] The Christian Jesus is evidently meant, since "Jeshu" is a common Talmudic designation for him. But the historical reliability of the story is very doubtful. It so happens that the older Palestinian Talmud contains a parallel to this story,[2] in which there is no mention of "Jeshu." An undesignated disciple of Jehuda ben Tabai stands in his place. Evidently the Babylonian form of the story has been worked up in the interest of Jewish polemic against Christianity. And since most of the Talmudic references to Jesus seem to have been inspired by some item of Christian teaching,

[1] *Sanhedrin* 107*b* and *Sota* 47*a*. For the full narrative see Strack, *Jesus, die Häretiker und die Christen nach den ältesten jüdischen Angaben* (Leipzig, 1910), pp. 10 f.

[2] *Hag.* 2, 2; cf. Strack, *op. cit.*, pp. 9 f.

it is barely possible that just the sort of argument Epiphanius used to prove that the church was in the line of direct succession from David, thus connecting Jesus with Alexander, is behind this similar Talmudic tradition.

Epiphanius makes two further statements which are sometimes thought to point to a pre-Christian Jesus. He says that there were Nazarees (or Nasarees)[1] before Christ, and that Philo once wrote a treatise describing the early Christian community in Egypt.[2] If there was a well established Christian church in Egypt in Philo's day, and if the Nazarees were in existence in pre-Christian times, are we not to infer that Christianity was known in the first century B.C.? Epiphanius himself says that Christians were first known as Nazorees, so that the similarity of names suggests a close relation for the two bodies. Moreover Philo, who was a man of advanced age in 40 A.D. when he headed the Jewish embassy to Rome, can hardly

[1] He uses the form Ναζαραῖοι in *Haer.*, XVIII, 1–3, and XIX, 5, but Νασαραῖοι in XXIX, 6. Cf. Schwen in *Protestantische Monatshefte*, XIV (1910), 208–13 and Nestle in *ibid.*, 349 f. On the genesis of Epiphanius' phraseology, cf. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente und Untersuchungen zu den Judenchristlichen Evangelien* (Leipzig, 1911), pp. 90 ff.; cf. Bousset in *Theologische Rundschau*, XIV (1911), 373 ff.

[2] *Haer.*, XXIX, 5.

have seen Christianity, on the traditional view of its origin, so firmly established in Egypt as is implied in the treatise to which Epiphanius refers. Hence we are to look for the beginnings of the new religion in the first century B.C., so the argument runs.

On examining the data more closely it very soon becomes evident that Epiphanius has no thought of connecting Christianity with the Jewish Nazarite heresy. He places the latter's origin before the Christian era and classes it along with the Hemerobaptists, etc. On the other hand, he describes Christian heretics whom he designates Nazorees [Ναζωραῖοι], distinguishing with perfect clearness between them and the Jewish non-Christian Nazarees. The difference is not merely one of name; they have very distinct characteristics. The Nazarees are distinguished for the unorthodoxy of their Jewish beliefs and practices; the Nazorees are pre-eminently rigid Jews who have added to their Judaism a smattering of Christian belief. Hence they derive their name from Jesus the Nazorite, the name by which the Christians were called before they received the designation "Christians" at Antioch. Epiphanius' thought is often very hazy, but on this

subject he is perfectly clear. There was among the Jews even before the Christian era a heresy of the Nazarees; then came the Christian movement, which at first was known as the sect of the Nazorees and which finds its proper continuation, as Epiphanius takes great pains to prove, in the catholic church; and finally there was a third class who took upon themselves the primitive Christian name of Nazorees but who adhered so rigidly to Judaism that Epiphanius curtly remarks, "they are Jews and nothing else."[1]

Whether there ever was such an array of sects bearing a similar name—and Epiphanius adds yet another, the Nazirees, represented by Samson in the Old Testament and later by John the Baptist[2]—may be questioned. Judging from the same writer's skill in splitting the original Essenes up into Jessees, Ossenes, and Ossees, we may wonder whether he did not occasionally invent a name, in his ardor to defend Nicene orthodoxy against every "hydra-headed serpent of error" that could ever possibly have existed whether commonly known or not. But one thing at least is clear. His

[1] *Haer.*, XXIX, 7.

[2] *Ibid.*, XXIX, 5.

statements about Nazarees, Nasarees, Nazorees, and Nazirees involve no ambiguity whatever as to the date of Christianity's origin. The traditional date is the only one suggested. Those who argue for a pre-Christian Jesus can find nothing for their purpose here except the bare mention of the early existence of a Jewish Nazarite heresy. To prove the reliability of this statement, and to show further that the sect was "Christian" in character, is another problem. Epiphanius supplies no argument for this. He does not even so describe the Nazarees as to suggest characteristics which show them to have been precursors of the Christian movement.

On the other hand, Epiphanius clearly states that there was in Egypt a Christian community about which Philo wrote. If this is so, then in all probability it existed before, or at least contemporaneously with, the Jesus of the gospels. Here it is a question of tracing and testing Epiphanius' sources of information. He was writing in the latter part of the fourth century, and we may suppose that he availed himself of the works of Philo, Josephus, and Eusebius. He may indeed have had other sources of which we now have no knowledge,

but on the basis of these alone some of his riddles can be unraveled.[1]

Philo, in his tractate *Quod omnis probus liber*, describes a sect of Jews called Essees [Ἐσσαῖοι] because of their saintly [ὅσιος] character. These are readily recognized as the Essenes [Ἐσσηνοί] mentioned by Josephus.[2] Their characteristics are too well known to need further comment.[3] In another treatise[4] Philo

[1] The character of Epiphanius' sources of information and the historical value of his statements are puzzling problems which need reworking. Cf. the still valuable works of Lipsius, *Zur Quellenkritik des Epiphanius* (Wien, 1865) and Hilgenfeld, *Die Ketzergeschichte des Urchristentums* (Leipzig, 1884). Tradition represents him to have been a man of great learning who had traveled much and read widely, yet it is evident that he was swayed by a tremendous zeal for orthodoxy.

[2] Philo had no scruples in deriving the name of a Jewish sect from a Greek source. But the variation of spelling seems to point rather to an Aramaic original, חסין and חסיא, which are plural forms from חסא.

[3] See Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (Leipzig, 1904³, II, 561–80. English tr., *History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, New York, 1891, Div. II, Vol. II, 188–218); also article "Essenes" in the Bible dictionaries.

[4] The authorship of *De vita contemplativa*, so long debated, seems finally to have been decided in Philo's favor. See F. C. Conybeare, *Philo about the Contemplative Life* (Oxford, 1895); Massebieau, "Le traité de la vie contemplative et la question des thérapeutes," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, XVI (1887), 170–98 and 284–319; Wendland, "Die Therapeuten" in *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie*, XXII (Suppl.), 1896, 692–770.

describes a sect somewhat akin to the Essenes, but less widely diffused among the Jews and more distinctly monastic in its type of life. Its principal colony was on an eminence on the southern shore of Lake Mareotis near Alexandria. The members of the society called themselves Therapeutes [θεραπευταί], either meaning "healers" of men's souls, or "servants" of God. In Eusebius' day, when the Christians had come to prize highly the monastic ideal, this early sect seemed to be the natural precursor of Egyptian encratic Christian orders of the late third century A.D. Accordingly it was assumed that at this early date Christianity had been planted in Egypt through the labors of John Mark. And to account for Philo's friendliness toward the movement—for he wrote of the Therapeutes in terms of evident approval—it was suggested that at the time he conducted the embassy to Rome he had met and been favorably impressed by Peter.[1]

When these materials pass under the magic touch of Epiphanius, what is the result? In the first place, the Essees (or Essenes) of Philo and Josephus disappear. Epiphanius' Essenes,

[1] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, II, 16 f. According to later tradition Philo became a convert under Peter's preaching (Photius, *Cod.* 105).

who later become Ossenes and still later Ossees, are one of four subdivisions of the Samaritans. It may seem very strange that he should leave a lacuna in his array of heretics by removing the Essenes from among the Jews. But does he leave any vacancy by this removal? Has he not filled the gap with his pre-Christian Jewish heresy of the Nazarees, of which we have already spoken? In describing them[1] he made it one of their chief characteristics that they rejected the system of animal sacrifice connected with the Temple; and this was a notable tenet of the Essenes, as described by Philo and Josephus. The name "Nazarees" may have been suggested by the Old Testament Nazirees, whom Epiphanius is so careful to distinguish from the Christian heresy of the Nazorees. Thus the Essenes, who straightway become Jessees, Ossenes, etc., are reserved for a yet more important service. We may pass by the Ossenes-Ossees (was the spelling suggested by Philo's derivation of the name from ὅσιος?) without further comment. Our interest is with the Jessees.

Epiphanius adopts the Eusebian tradition that Christianity was planted in Egypt by

[1] *Haer.*, XVIII, 1–3.

Mark,[1] and that Philo's Therapeutes were the primitive Christians. But the title of Philo's treatise was, according to Epiphanius, *Concerning Jessees* [περὶ Ἰεσσαίων]. In the opening paragraph of *De vita contemplativa* Philo speaks of the Therapeutes in a way to indicate that he regarded them as a type of Essees (Essenes). They were the Essees of the contemplative life in contrast with the Essees of the practical life. So it would not have been wholly incongruous to refer to his tractate as *Concerning Essees* [περὶ Ἐσσαίων]. But whence came *Concerning Jessees?*[2] Epiphanius introduces the subject of the Jessees as a part of his argument for the continuation of the Davidic throne in the catholic church. Speaking of the early followers of Jesus before they were first called Christians at Antioch, he says:

> They were called Jessees after Jesse, I think. Since David was descended from Jesse, and Mary was in the direct line of succession from the seed of David, the Divine Scriptures according to the Old Testament are fulfilled, the Lord having said to David, "of the fruit of thy loins I will place one upon thy throne."

[1] *Haer.*, XXIX, 5; LI, 6.

[2] The regular title is *περὶ βίου θεωρητικοῦ*, or *ἱκέται ἢ περὶ ἀρετῶν τὸ δ'*.

After carrying through his argument along this line, Epiphanius comes back to the word "Jessees" and admits the opportunist character of his previous explanation. He still thinks it may have come from "Jesse," yet it may have come from "Jesus," "for Jesus in the Hebrew dialect signifies Therapeute [θεραπευτής], i.e., physician and savior."[1] Why are we here introduced to the Therapeutes? Evidently because the objective basis of the author's thought in this connection is Philo's Therapeutes, coupled with the Eusebian tradition that these were primitive Christians. Epiphanius wishes to find them a more appropriate name, and this he has done to his satisfaction in the word Jessees. It answers his purpose in several directions. He can check it off theologically with Jesse, etymologically (through Therapeutes) with Jesus, analogically with Essees (the general class of which Philo speaks), and historically with Therapeutes (the specific term used by Philo).

Thus Epiphanius, as a witness for the pre-Christian date of Jesus and of Christianity, is a distinct failure. We have dwelt thus at length upon this subject because his assertion

[1] See *Haer.*, XXIX, 1, 4.

that Jesus was born in the time of Alexander Jannaeus, his mention of pre-Christian Nazarees, and his suggestion of a connection between "Jesus" and "Therapeutes" seem to us to represent the most substantial data which the radicals have to offer in support of their position.

There are however a few other items of evidence which they regard as giving further positive substantiation to their hypothesis. Among the most explicit of these are two passages from a papyrus fragment containing formulas of exorcism. They run as follows:[1] *ορκιζω σε κατα του μαρπαρκουριθ· νασαaρι· . . . .* (l. 1549) and *ορκιζω σε κατα θεου των Εβραιων Ιησους· Ιαβα· Ιαη· . . . .* (ll. 3019 f.). The significant word in the first formula is *νασαaρι*, since it is thought to be a reference to the "Nazarite." But the import of the second passage is much more certain. Here Jesus is clearly mentioned: "I adjure thee by the god of the Hebrews, Jesus, Jaba, Jae, etc." If the formula is pre-Christian it would seem to be positive evidence for the

[1] The fragment is at Paris in the Bibliothèque Nationale (No. 574, Supplément grec). It has been edited by Wessely, *Denkschriften der philosophisch-historischen Classe der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Wien* (1888, XXXVI, 27–208).

existence of an early Hebrew deity by the name of "Jesus" or even "Jesus the Nazarite." But the manuscript from which all this is taken is conceded to belong between 300 and 400 A.D. This fact of itself puts the document out of court as first-hand testimony for customs in the first century B.C., especially when we recall how easily magical formulas gathered to themselves all sorts of accretions quite regardless of rhyme or reason. The word "Jesus" is here evidently a pagan supplement made by a copyist who did not distinguish between Jews and Christians.[1]

Another piece of alleged evidence for a pre-Christian Jesus is taken from Hippolytus. This church father, who it will be recalled wrote in the early third century A.D., cites a hymn used by the gnostic sect of the Naassenes in which Jesus' name occurs. He is represented as

[1] Cf. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten* (Tübingen, 1908[2]), p. 186, n. 14. The heathen scribe may have been betrayed into the error of calling Jesus "God of the Hebrews" by the custom among Jewish magicians in the Diaspora of employing names borrowed from various sources. And that there was, indeed, some disposition among Jews in the rabbinical period to use the name of the Christian Jesus in magic, is seen in Jacob of Kephar Sama's proposal to heal R. Eleazar of snake bite "in the name of Joshua ben Pandera." Against objections raised by R. Ishmael, R. Eleazar contended that the act could be justified, but he died before the proof was completed. (Tosephta, *Hullin*, 11:21–23).

asking the Father's permission to visit the earth in order to teach men the secrets of "gnosis" and thus to relieve their distressed condition.[1] Both Smith and Drews use this in support of their position, but without making any serious attempt to prove that the passage originated before the Christian era. Smith excuses himself from discussing the date, while Drews says "to all appearances pre-Christian," and cites a Babylonian parallel to the hymn, which, however, may only signify that Babylonian and Christian materials were used in its composition. When we turn to Hippolytus' own testimony we find no hint that the Christian elements in the Naassene system are "pre-Christian." In fact he explicitly affirms that the heretics themselves cited "James the brother of the Lord" as the source of their teaching.[2] Whatever the antiquity of the sect itself may be, as described by Hippolytus it is a heretical *Christian* sect, and the supposition that the reference to Jesus is a pre-Christian feature lacks support.

Two other points emphasized by W. B. Smith as having special evidential value are the

[1] Hippolytus, *Refutation*, v, 5.

[2] *Ibid.*, v, 2.

statement in Acts 18:25 that Apollos was preaching "the things concerning Jesus" while he as yet knew only the baptism of John, and the use of "Nazarite" as an appellation for Jesus. From the former it is inferred that a "doctrine" concerning Jesus, sufficiently definite and vital to form the background of a vigorous propaganda, existed in pre-Christian times. But this can be maintained only by a very liberal reading between the lines in the narrative of Acts. The natural meaning of the passage is quite different. The writer of Acts, perhaps more from necessity than from choice, has left us in the dark regarding many phases of early Christianity. One of these obscure items is the early practice of baptism. Even Paul has very little to say upon this subject, yet he seems to have regarded the ordinance as typifying, if not effecting in some magical way, the believer's entrance "into Christ." Consequently it was naturally attended by the bestowal of the Holy Spirit.[1] Another idea early connected with the ordinance is the notion of repentance. While both repentance and the giving of the Spirit are connected with the rite in Acts, chap. 2, it is not improbable that

[1] Cf. I Cor. 12:13.

repentance baptism, such as John the Baptist and his followers preached, was the notion adopted by the first Christians. The "mystical union" interpretation, accompanied by the doctrine of endowment by the Holy Spirit, may have been a Pauline contribution to the history of dogma. On this understanding of the situation all becomes clear in Acts 18:25 ff. Apollos had been first introduced to Christianity by non-Pauline Christians. Later he was "Paulinized"—not christianized—by Priscilla and Aquila.

Smith's second point rests upon an argument from silence. No mention of the village of Nazareth, either before or in the early part of the Christian era, has been found anywhere except in Christian writings. Hence it is concluded that this place-name has been derived simply from the phrase "Jesus the Nazarite." Jesus was not, as is commonly supposed, called the "Nazarite" because his home was in Nazareth; an imaginary Nazareth was created because Jesus was called the "Nazarite." The real genesis of the title must therefore be sought in the Hebrew root N-S-R, meaning to watch, protect, etc. The Nazarite then is a primitive cult-god worshiped as the watcher, protector,

savior. It will be observed that this reversal of the ordinary interpretation of the data rests on the assumption that the village of Nazareth never existed,[1] a conclusion which in turn is derived solely from the silence of non-Christian writers. But this silence about a small Galilean town can hardly be so very significant. Recalling the apologetic difficulties caused by the statement that Jesus' home was Nazareth, when christological speculation felt compelled to connect him with David's city, Bethlehem, it seems quite unlikely that Christians would have invented, or at least have failed to challenge, so unprofitable a fiction.

A few similar "proofs," as presented by Drews, may be noted in passing. Evidence for a long history of the name Jesus is seen in the magical power attached to the name already "at the beginning of the Christian propaganda," "an entirely inconceivable fact if its bearer had been a mere man." But the ancients who used magic were not given to critical skepticism in such matters. It would be quite sufficient for them to know that Jesus' followers believed him now to occupy a place of authority in the

[1] Cf. the view of Cheyne (*Encyclopaedia Biblica*, art. "Nazareth") and of Mead, that Nazareth = Galilee, a theory which does not serve Smith's purpose.

divine realm. Moreover the date and extent of the magical use of Jesus' name is a more doubtful problem than is here assumed to be the case.[1] Another point is made of the type of Christology in the Book of Revelation and in the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. The "Jesus" in these books is thought to have "nothing in common with the Christian Jesus" and to be "in all probability" taken over from a pre-Christian cult. But we have previously been told that the Christian Jesus also came from this source. Then why the variation in type? Not only does the assertion that they have nothing in common seem ill-advised, but the differences may easily be accounted for by conditions within the history of Christianity.

The above arguments may be designated "direct" evidence for the existence of Jesus as a pre-Christian cult-god. The effort to find a place for him among the Jews results in a few more arguments of a supplementary character. It is urged that the idea of a suffering Messiah

[1] Paul gives a hint of this practice in his day (Phil. 2:9 f.), and Acts, chap. 3, shows the early believers defending their right so to use Jesus' name. But how extensively this was done at an early date is not known. It was natural enough for the custom to arise, in view of contemporary ideas regarding the magical significance of a name. Cf. Heitmüller, "*Im Namen Jesu*" (Göttingen, 1903, pp. 132–222).

is not distinctively Christian but was earlier a Jewish doctrine, having been taken over from the heathen notion of a suffering, dying, and rising god. To be sure, nature myths personifying the death of winter and the revival to new life in the spring are common in the heathen mythologies of Asia Minor. Acquaintance with these on the part of the Jews is possible and even probable, but evidence that these notions formed an important part in the construction of their messianic hope is scanty. Certainly a mere collection of isolated points suggesting similarities of ideas is not sufficient proof of borrowing, particularly when the Jewish literature shows so little to confirm the supposition. Isaiah, chap. 53, is sometimes cited in this connection. But granting that its thought may be of heathen origin and its significance messianic[1]—both doubtful points—it is still true that official Judaism did not interpret the suffering servant of Isaiah messianically; nor did early Christianity, which *ex hypothesi* represents the unofficial side of Jewish thought, make extensive use of the passage. Paul, whom Drews will concede to be a historical

[1] So Gressmann, *Der Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie* (Göttingen, 1906), pp. 302–33.

personality of primal importance for the new movement, employs the idea of the offered victim in the Jewish sacrificial system rather than that of the "suffering servant." The gospels show that Jesus' personal associates were utterly unprepared for his death, and Paul says that the early Christian preaching about a dying Messiah was a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks. This is a very strange situation if the notion was originally heathen and had been early adopted by Judaism. The primitive Christians had too much difficulty in defending their belief in a suffering Messiah to allow us to suppose that they found the idea current in Judaism, or even that the heathen notion of a dying and rising divinity was recognized as having any essential similarity with their preaching about "Jesus Christ and him crucified."

The attempt to locate a pre-Christian Jesus in orthodox Judaism is implicitly admitted by the radicals to be hopeless. Hence they resort to the hypothesis of secret sects whose worship, ritual, and dogma centered about this Jesus-god of the cult. That there were divers sects within Judaism in pre-Christian times is a fairly well established fact. Philo, Josephus, the New

Testament, the early Fathers, and the Talmud, all support, more or less strongly, this opinion. We hear of Samaritans, Pharisees, Herodians, Essenes, Therapeutes, to say nothing of groups of followers collected from time to time by messianic pretenders, and the possible pre-Christian origin of various heresies mentioned at a later date in the Patristic literature and the Talmud. From the time of Antiochus Epiphanes down to about the close of the first century A.D., the Jews were passing through turbulent experiences, when factions within and forces from without were strongly affecting their life and thought. It is not at all impossible that by the end of the first century A.D. there may have been in circulation a body of literature roughly answering to the seventy books of II Esd. 14:46.

But what value have these facts for the idea of a pre-Christian Jesus? Is he mentioned anywhere in connection with these sects, or in any of the non-canonical Jewish writings that have come to us from this period? He certainly is not. In what we know of the tenets and practices of these sects is there anything to indicate his existence? Here, too, specific evidence for an affirmative answer fails. It is

true that our knowledge of these movements is relatively meager and mostly secondary. Yet such descriptions as are given by Philo and Josephus are usually thought to be reliable, and nothing appears here to indicate that the worship of a special cult-god characterized any of the sects or parties then known. A recently discovered document published by Schechter is of great importance.[1] It gives us new information about one of these obscure Jewish movements, but there is not the slightest intimation that these sectaries worshiped a special cult-god. They looked back with reverence to a "teacher of righteousness" who was the founder of their society, and awaited the time when "the teacher of righteousness shall arise in the last days" and "the anointed shall arise from Israel and Aaron." Whether the teacher yet to appear was the same who had died is disputed,[2] but at any rate this individual

[1] *Documents of Jewish Sectaries*, I, Fragments of a Zadokite Work. Edited with Translation, Introduction, and Notes by Schechter (Cambridge University Press, 1910).

[2] The editor of the document thinks a resurrection is implied; G. F. Moore is of the contrary opinion ("The Covenanters of Damascus; a Hitherto Unknown Jewish Sect" in the *Harvard Theological Review*, IV [1911], 330–77). Cf. Kohler, "Dositheus, the Samaritan Heresiarch, etc.," in the *American Journal of Theology*, XV (1911), 404–35, who sees here an example of the Samaritan doctrine of the Messiah's disappearing and reappearing at will.

is no dying and rising Adonis-like savior-deity. Jehovah the God of Israel is the sole object of worship. So in general the thought-content of Jewish parties or heresies, as far as known at present, did not concern itself with the worship of any special deities, but with the best means of rendering acceptable service to the common god of their fathers. Thus the sectaries were often rigid separatists, but they were not worshipers of other deities.

The extremes to which the radicals are driven in their endeavor to make room for the pre-Christian Jesus of their hypothesis is illustrated in Drews's assertions regarding secret cults in Judaism. He says that not only have the world-views of Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks influenced Judaism polytheistically, but from the beginning, side by side with the priestly and officially accentuated view of the One God, went a faith in other gods, a faith which not only received constantly new nourishment from foreign influences but, above all, which seemed to be fostered in the secret sects. This seems to be a very injudicious statement of the situation. That the main line of Judaism contained syncretistic elements is now generally recognized, and the early and continued activity

of separatist parties of various types cannot be disputed, but the perpetual and widespread existence of secret polytheistic cults among the Jews is not supported by any substantial evidence.

Jesus' name can be connected with these sects, which are alleged to have worshiped him as a cult-god, only by a precarious process of etymologizing, a method by which one may usually argue much and prove nothing. Already we have noted the futility of the argument based on the equation, Joshua = Jesus. As a sample of the way he is discovered to have been the special object of reverence among the Essenes and Therapeutes, we are reminded that Philo indicates a kinship between the Essenes, whose name means "pious," "God-fearing," and the Therapeutes, meaning "physicians." Also "Jesus" signifies in Hebrew "helper," "deliverer." Then the argument proceeds: "The Therapeutes and Essenes looked upon themselves as physicians"—did the Essenes?—"especially as physicians of souls, accordingly it is not at all improbable that they worshiped their cult-god under this name," that is, the name Jesus. Can an argument of this sort establish even a shadow of likelihood, not to

mention probabilities? We are also told that the pre-Christian Nazarees mentioned by Epiphanius will unquestionably have worshiped the "Nazarite" whose attributes as protector, savior (Jesus), have already been derived from the Hebrew root N-S-R. In addition to this point of Smith's, Drews notes that the Hebrew word *netzer*, the "shoot out of Jesse" mentioned in Isaiah, is the symbol of the "Redeemer" in his character of a deity of vegetation and life, "an idea which also may have made itself felt in the name of the Nazarees." The futility of arguments of this sort is self-evident, even without noting their occasional absurdity from a purely linguistic point of view.[1]

When the doctrine of a pre-Christian Jesus is applied more specifically to the origin of Christianity, the inadequacy of the hypothesis becomes still more evident. As a concrete instance, we may take Drews's application of

[1] We can imagine that the Zadokite sectaries, to use Schechter's designation, by the application of a similar argument may also be made worshipers of the pre-Christian Jesus. For do we not find in their writings the statement that God "made bud for Israel and Aaron a root of a plant to inherit his lands"? To be sure, the Hebrew for root is *shoresh*, but the thought is very similar to Isa. 60:21, where *netzer* occurs. So we have the progression *shoresh*, *netzer*, "Nazarite," the cult-god Jesus. Ridiculous indeed, but hardly impossible, we should think, for one suffering from chronic "etymologitis."

the theory to explain the Christianity of Paul. In Tarsus, where heathen religious notions flourished, Paul had heard of a Jewish sect-god, Jesus. Paul's sympathies, however, were with official Judaism, and he studied to become a teacher of the law. The gospel of "Jesus," which was originally "nothing other than a Judaized and spiritualized Adonis-cult," was first preached by men of Cyprus and Cyrene, and Paul opposed this preaching because the law pronounced a curse upon everyone who hung upon a tree. Then suddenly there came over him a great enlightenment. The dying Adonis became a self-sacrificing god, surrendering his life for the world. This was "the moment of Christianity's birth as a religion of Paul."

This attempted derivation of Pauline Christianity from the cult of Adonis fails not only because it is too highly fanciful, but because of its serious omissions. On the one hand, important features in Adonis' career find no place in Paul's picture of Jesus—for example, the youthful god slain by the wild boar, and the mourning of his goddess sweetheart. But more significant is the failure of the Adonis legend to suggest some of the most specific and

important items in Paul's thought of Jesus, such as his human ancestry and family connections,[1] his association with disciples,[2] his righteous life[3] lived in worldly poverty,[4] his self-sacrificing service,[5] his heavenly exaltation as a reward for obedience,[6] the circumstances of his death,[7] the awakening of faith through his appearances,[8] and finally the stress Paul puts on the Messiah's future coming, and his present significance for the spiritual life of believers.

It is also doubtful whether the idea of a suffering deity is so genetically vital to Paul's thought as Drews assumes. Is it the God-man Jesus or the Man-god Jesus that stands as the corner-stone of the Pauline gospel? We must not forget that for Paul there is but one supreme deity, the activity of whose will is manifest in all things. Although Jesus was a pre-existent being who voluntarily surrendered his heavenly position, still it is God who sent him to earth, God raised him from the dead and

[1] Rom. 1:3; 1 Cor. 9:5; Gal. 1:19; 4:4.
[2] I Cor. 15:5; Gal. 1:17 f., etc.
[3] Rom. 5:18 f.; II Cor. 5:21.
[4] II Cor. 8:9; cf. Phil. 2:5 ff.
[5] Rom. 15:3; II Cor. 10:1.
[6] Rom. 1:4; Phil. 2:9 f.
[7] I Cor. 11:23; and numerous references to his crucifixion.
[8] I Cor. 5:5–8; Gal. 1:12, 16.

delegates to him the conduct of the judgment, and to God at last he submits all things in order that God may be all in all. It is true that Paul speculates about the activity of Jesus in the angelic realm in subordination to God, but the significance of this activity in man's behalf lies not in the abstract thought of an incarnated redeeming divinity but in an actual human life terminated by a violent death. Not some hypothesis about his *becoming* a man, but the way he lived and the *outcome* of his career as a man, his success in contrast with the first man's failures, his restoration of the ideal of a perfect man, these are the phases of his activity which make him truly the savior of men. His resurrection and his present activity in the spiritual life of the community are the further assurance of his saving power. In all this the thought of pre-existence is never the stress point. The heavenly man, the earthly Jesus, the exalted Christ (Messiah), the heavenly Lord, are all features in Paul's system; but the point of supreme importance for his gospel, that which he makes the central item of his preaching, is the transition from the second to the third stage of this progression, from "Jesus" to "Christ and him crucified."

In like manner the application of the pre-Christian Jesus-theory to the gospels fails to take account of the actual situation there depicted. Again using Drews as an illustration, the point of departure for his treatment of the gospel material is a citation from Wrede to the effect that Mark was an apologetic treatise aiming to prove to gentile readers that Jesus was the Son of God. Even granting this, it is not the same as saying that Mark was primarily interested in showing that the Son of God was Jesus. Nor is Drews justified in his conclusion that "in the gospels we have to do not with a deified man but rather with an anthropomorphized god." This assertion needs qualifications. It does not truly represent the order in which gospel thought proceeds, nor the situation in which the early Christian apologists found themselves.

What troubled the first missionaries of the new religion was not the reluctance of their hearers to believe that a god had become a man, but their hesitation about believing that a man, especially an obscure Jew who had been ignominiously put to death, was really the Son of God. The oldest type of synoptic tradition does not connect either Jesus' activity or his

teaching with a deified past. At baptism he first appears as God's son, and his life history is interpreted constantly with reference to his future rather than to his past. His teachings are not of any angelic world out of which he has come, but of the earthly life to be lived in spiritual fellowship with God, and the future welfare of himself and his followers. Belief in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus is the starting-point for theological elaboration in gospel tradition, and the interpreter's task is seen to be not the problem of reading the divine out of Jesus' career but of so narrating the story of his activity that it might fittingly relate itself to the later faith in him as the exalted Messiah. Only in the later stages of the tradition, as in the Fourth Gospel and in the nativity stories of Matthew and Luke, does the process of elevation reach back as far as the pre-earthly side of Jesus' career.

Consequently the idea of a pre-Christian cult-god, as the starting-point for the gospel religion, does not answer the requirements of the situation. A similar objection holds against Kalthoff's supposition that Jesus is merely the community's ideal personified to save it from perishing. On the contrary, gospel thought

moves in the opposite direction. It proceeds from the person to his idealization rather than from the ideal to its personification. The extent to which the evangelists' narratives are historical is another problem, but unquestionably this literary activity moves out from the idea of a historical Jesus who has become the heavenly Christ, and so is the object of unique devotion and reverence.

When all the evidence brought against Jesus' historicity is surveyed it is found to contain no elements of strength. All theories that would explain the rise of the New Testament literature by making it a purely fictitious product fail, and the arguments for a pre-Christian Jesus are found to lack any substantial basis. One of the serious defects of the negative procedure is the way in which the great bulk of testimony for the origin of Christianity is unceremoniously set aside in favor of a hypothetical reconstruction based upon obscure and isolated points. This results in a promiscuous forcing of all data into line with an otherwise unverified theory as to how the new religion might possibly have arisen. So it has happened that no advocate of the negative position, at least none since Bauer, has con-

cerned himself primarily and comprehensively with the principal data in the field, showing for example that the letters of Paul and the primitive gospel tradition are wholly spurious. A theory of Christianity's origin has been foisted upon our attention before the way has been cleared for it in a field already occupied.

Moreover when the credentials of the negative hypothesis, and its application to Christian origins, are minutely examined, their unsubstantial and fallacious character becomes evident. The chief strength of the whole negative position is the intangibility of the data on which it rests. It is built upon a few isolated points whose chief argumentative value lies in the fact that in their present setting there is some uncertainty as to their exact meaning. Thus they lend themselves to liberal hypothesizing. We have already observed that the detailed items advanced as evidence for a pre-Christian Jesus are of this character. But on closer inspection not only do we find no well-attested references to him but there is also no appropriate place for him in the history of the period where he is supposed to belong. The argument for his existence may sometimes have a semblance of plausibility but this is

because the data offered in its support are obscure either as to context or content, so that generous reading between the lines, liberal etymologizing, and the like, become the main stock in trade for these theorists. They can, to be sure, claim a certain degree of immunity from the weapons of adverse criticism. This fact, however, is not to be taken, as they would sometimes have us believe, as attesting the strength of their theory. It is just because of the intangible character of its premises that their argument cannot easily be submitted to detailed scientific rebuttal. As Weiss remarks, it is the most difficult task in the world to prove to nonsense that it is nonsense.

CHAPTER V

PRAGMATIC PHASES OF PRIMITIVE TRADITION

The argument against Jesus' historicity has already been found to lack adequate support. Unless its advocates can offer more valid reasons for their skepticism, and can make the constructive presentation of their hypothesis agree more closely with all the data in the field of primitive Christian history, they can scarcely hope to find a substantial following. At present the prospects of success for the radical contention seem to be slight, and no necessity is generally felt even for asking, Did a historical Jesus ever live?

Yet when this question is asked can an affirmative answer be formulated sufficiently strong to prove, beyond the possibility of a reasonable doubt, that Jesus was a genuinely historical character? It may not be inappropriate to set forth some specific reasons for believing in his historicity, especially since those who adhere to the opposite view sometimes claim that they are not obliged to justify

their skepticism unless a valid argument for historicity is advanced. We shall not be concerned to determine the full amount of reliable information about Jesus now available; we confine attention to the single issue, Did Jesus ever live?

The radicals will not allow us to point as proof to the uniformity of Christian opinion today, or merely to cite the Christian tradition of the past. They insist, and quite rightly, that not the Jesus of history but rather the risen and heavenly Christ of faith has held the central position in believers' thought from the earliest times down to the present. It is pointed out that this state of affairs existed even as early as the time of Paul, who had relatively little to say of an earthly Jesus in comparison with his emphasis upon the heaven-exalted individual who was soon to come in judgment. To be sure, it may be difficult to imagine that the Christ of faith could in the first instance have come to occupy the place he did without the reality of an earthly Jesus, but to assume this connection as a presupposition would be to beg the question at issue. In fact, those who deny Jesus' historicity maintain that it is impossible to believe in the reality of his earthly

career just because of the very exalted place he occupied in the primitive theology. They say that memory of his human limitations would have prevented that idealization of him which is found in early tradition. Consequently we are asked to show that early Christian speculation has room for the actual career of an earthly Jesus.

On general grounds we may note that the deification of men was not unusual in this period of the world's history. And if it is objected that Jesus had done nothing to prompt belief in him as a heaven-exalted hero —that he was no world-conquering Alexander —one may say that his heroic suffering was the pathway by which he ascended to heavenly honors. If a-priori considerations are to be urged, is it not quite impossible to imagine a company of believers declaring themselves to have been companions of a fictitious person and reverencing him even to the extent of sacrificing their lives for his cause? There are two factors in this situation which distinguish it from the mythical anthropomorphizing of deities in general. The order of progress, which has already been seen to show itself in early Christian interpretation, is from Jesus the man

to Christ the heavenly Lord; and emphasis falls upon the proximity of the events. It is true that no New Testament book may be held to give us the exact views of a personal follower of Jesus, yet the great bulk of early tradition gives the reader the vivid impression that the unique phenomena behind the New Testament faith, and the person whom it reverences, are not projected into some remote past but have appeared within the memory of men still living. On the other hand we have to admit that the New Testament may contain features created by the pious fancy of the early believers, hence a request for more specific proof that the earthly figure of Jesus is not a mere product of this interest in interpretation is not out of place.

The obscurity of Christianity's beginnings makes our task a difficult one. While there is ample evidence that the new religion was in existence about the close of the first century A.D., there is no contemporary account of its beginnings, much less such an account of the life of its alleged founder. He left no written records of his teaching, and none of the New Testament writings can be assigned with absolute certainty to the pen of a personal disciple

of Jesus. At first the adherents of the new faith apparently had no idea of any prolonged propaganda, or of a time after the first generation of Christians should have passed away when written documents would be needed to supply information about the early days of the faith. It is now well known that the literature which purports to narrate the story of Jesus' career does not, in its present form, come from the first generation of Christians. Mark, though the earliest gospel, was written at a time when the author would be compelled to thread his way back to Jesus through from thirty to forty years of development in the thought and life of the church, and that too in a period when tradition was in its most fluid state. The other evangelists were under a similar necessity, the difficulty being perhaps greater in their case since they were chronologically farther removed from the original events. Paul's letters are the earliest extant Christian writings, yet they were not composed with any deliberate purpose of instructing posterity on questions of history, or even of expounding the content of contemporary thinking. They aim rather to meet special exigencies among the churches. Hence the modern his-

torian must rely upon secondary sources in his effort to recover the Jesus of history.

It is true that the gospels do distinctly emphasize the career of Jesus, but their portrait is soon discovered to be colored by the interests of developing dogma. This necessitates a critical handling of the material in order to distinguish earlier from later phases of tradition. Mark has been found to be the earliest of the gospels, while still earlier written materials, in addition to Mark, are thought to have been used by the writers of Matthew and Luke. The Fourth Gospel is now believed to have originated last, and to have been written more especially as an interpretative account of Jesus' personality. Thus our sources of information, in inverse chronological order, are John, Matthew, Luke (or Luke, Matthew), Mark, and the non-Markan sections of Matthew and Luke which have so strong a verbal resemblance that the use of earlier common-source material may be safely assumed. With these generally accepted results of modern gospel criticism before us it might seem an easy matter to discriminate, at least in the main outlines, between later accretions and the primitive historical data. Will not the earliest document be the

purest historically, while the other documents will be estimated according to chronological position?

This method is undoubtedly valuable as far as it goes, but it does not meet the ultimate needs of historical inquiry, inasmuch as the oldest source may quite likely be itself influenced by theological interests. The idea that there was a primitive period in the history of Christianity when doctrine was "pure," the recovery of which would give one the quintessence of Christianity, is now treated quite generally as a fiction; but is it not a kindred error to imagine an ideal period in the primitive tradition when only Simon-pure historical narrative about Jesus' life and teaching was in circulation? The earliest writer may indeed have had the best opportunity to learn the actual facts, and so his narrative will naturally be prized the most highly by historians, but what if the situation in which he found himself demanded an "interpretation" of the facts! This demand must have become evident almost at the beginning of the new community's life, and those who advocated the new faith must have early felt the desirability of rising to this occasion. Otherwise there would have been

little incentive for them to speak and still less likelihood that their words would have been remembered.

It does not follow that the early apologetic had no basis in fact, but we must recognize that the point of view from which the framers of the tradition presented their material, as well as the controlling interest in its selection and elaboration, were largely determined by their own historical situation. And so far as our evangelists are concerned, it is evident that they were by no means solely interested in writing the bare outlines of history. Their aim was to make the history they related count in favor of the type of faith which they preached, and which appealed to them as the true interpretation of the data. What the church found itself thinking and doing, as the result of the circumstances which molded its early life, this its theologians, in all good conscience, naturally endeavored to find warrant for in the life and teaching of Jesus. Had the evangelists failed to appreciate this demand of their times there would have been but slight occasion for them to write anything, and still less probability that what they wrote would be preserved. We must grant at the outset that

our present sources of information about Jesus are literary products framed subsequently to his career, and that they may indeed have been shaped to favor pragmatic interests. Therefore in using these documents today for purely historical purposes it is desirable to recognize at least some of the main pragmatic demands of that period.

What must the primitive Christians' gospel contain in order to insure its effectiveness in the thought-world of their day? In the first place, and above all else, it must offer an assurance of salvation. The notion of salvation did not originate with Christianity, nor was Jesus the first individual to be looked upon as a deliverer. The ancient religions of Egypt, Babylonia, and Persia all entertained the hope of salvation for humanity, and pictured more or less vividly the idea of redemption. The syncretistic faiths of the Roman world in Jesus' day show similar traits. Even the Roman poet, Vergil, voiced sentiments of this sort and seemed to think Augustus had ushered in the new age. Men everywhere hoped for deliverance, a deliverance ultimately to be effected by the deity. He alone could avert evils, destroy enemies, control fate, and give humanity a triumphant salvation.

Among the Jews this idea became highly specialized. God would one day deliver his chosen people from their enemies, either destroying all foes or else converting them into obedient subjects of Israel's sovereign. While the hope of political freedom was still strong, the golden age awaited the appearing of an ideal earthly ruler, the descendant of the hero-prince, David. But the period of temporary political independence under the Maccabeans proved so disappointing that in some circles less thought was given to the human mediator of the divine salvation and more emphasis fell upon the divine activity itself. God would, either in person or else through a messenger of his from the spirit-world, suddenly demonstrate his power to abolish all evil and to set up a new régime in a renovated earth. In the meantime it behooved men to wait upon the divine pleasure, and thus to insure for themselves if possible a favorable reception when God should act. While there was diversity in matters of detail, the main ambition of Judaism when Christianity appeared upon the scene was to win God's favor, thus establishing for man an assurance of salvation.

Under these circumstances thought of Jesus

after his death could scarcely have commended itself even to his disciples, much less to outsiders, had they not connected him in some substantial way with the hope of salvation. Otherwise a propaganda in his name would have been impossible. He would have been as unconditionally dismissed from further consideration as were Judas of Gamala and other discredited messianic aspirants. Nor was it possible for the first Christians to hold that Jesus' earthly life had given the actual demonstration of his saving mission, for he had died and deliverance had not yet been fully realized. In this his career was like that of Judas and the others; but he was unlike them in that the future held in store for him, so they asserted, the opportunity to effect the consummation of salvation. He was soon to return upon the clouds to establish the kingdom. However moderns may be disposed to regard this feature of early belief, it certainly was an indispensable item in the primitive interpretation of Jesus.

What had Jesus' earthly life to do with his saving mission? Seemingly very little in the earliest stages of interpretation. Even in the synoptic gospels the tardiness of his followers in attaining faith during his lifetime is every-

where admitted. When they do at last confess their belief in his messiahship they are still unprepared to hear of his death, they do not comprehend the reference to his resurrection, and they disband seemingly without hope after his crucifixion, all of which surely implies that whatever type of messianic hope they may have entertained for Jesus during his lifetime, his death brought about a very substantial transformation of their faith. The realization of salvation now became more distinctly an other-worldly affair, awaiting Jesus' advent in glory. The chief evidences that Jesus was the coming Messiah were not found at first in history but in the present experiences of the Christians themselves. At least in Paul's interpretation—and we have little reason to think that at this point he differed widely from other early Christians—the primary proofs offered are (1) Jesus' resurrection and (2) the spiritual gifts displayed in the lives of believers, thus attesting Jesus' present lordship.

Belief in Jesus' resurrection is fundamental to Paul's faith. He defends this belief by pointing out that it is scriptural, by citing the testimony of persons still living who have witnessed visions of the risen Lord, and finally

by pledging his own word: "If Christ has not been raised then is our preaching void, your faith also is void; yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we witness of God that he raised up Christ."[1] On an earlier occasion, when defending the superiority of the new religion in comparison with the assurance which a legalistic religion offered, Paul throws out a test question: "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? . . . . He therefore that supplieth to you the Spirit and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?"[2] Evidence of Jesus' lordship is thus proleptically displayed in these adumbrations of the new age soon to be ushered in by the Lord's "parousia." Hence, for Paul, to confess Jesus' lordship and to believe that God raised him from the dead guarantees salvation.[3]

It would seem, therefore, that Paul did not ask his hearers to go back into Jesus' earthly career at all for evidence of Jesus' messianic dignity. Paul did note features in Jesus' life,

[1] I Cor. 15:4–8, 14 f.

[2] Gal. 3:2, 5; cf. I Cor. 12:1 ff.; II Cor. 12:12; Rom. 15:18 f.

[3] Rom. 10:9.

such as his Davidic descent and his death on the cross, which were important preliminaries in the coming savior's program, but these things in themselves did not officially authenticate him as the Messiah. By these marks alone no one could be expected to recognize in him the promised deliverer. True, Paul does think that Jesus was potentially the Messiah even before he appeared upon earth, but he did not receive the insignia of office and the final stamp of divine authentication until he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead."[1] Almost identically the same interpretation is given in Acts 2:32 ff., where the disciples' witness to the resurrection, and the ecstatic life of the community in consequence of Jesus' exaltation, are cited as proof that "God hath made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom ye crucified."[2] Again in Acts 13:33 Jesus' resurrection is mentioned as a fulfilment of Ps. 2: "Thou art

[1] Rom. 1:4; cf. Phil. 2:9 f.

[2] Cf. Acts 3:13–15, where a miracle wrought by the disciples in Jesus' name is evidence that God "hath glorified his Servant Jesus," and where the disciples' testimony to the resurrection is again affirmed.

my son, this day have I begotten thee." These passages must represent an early type of thinking, even though they stand in so late a work as Acts. They will not have been created in an age when the notion had become current that divine sanction had already been officially set upon Jesus at the transfiguration,[1] or previously at his baptism,[2] or even before his birth.[3]

While the disciples, on the basis of their resurrection faith and the community's ecstatic life, may have been content to wait for further proof of Jesus' messiahship in what was yet to happen, others, and particularly Jews, must have demanded a more immediate basis for faith. How could the early preachers plausibly ask their hearers to believe that Jesus would come on the clouds with a divine commission to deliver Israel? We have already noted that some Jews at this time cherished the hope of a heavenly Messiah to be sent forth from God with miraculous power to deliver the faithful. Others were willing to connect the idea of

[1] Mark 9:7=Matt. 17:5=Luke 9:35.

[2] Mark 1:11=Matt. 3:17=Luke 3:22.

[3] Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38.

messiahship with an earthly individual who would exemplify the characteristics of their idealized warrior-prince, David, and under God's guidance deliver Israel from political oppression. But Christians were asking the Jews to identify the heavenly Messiah of the future with an earthly individual who during his lifetime had satisfied none of the generally accepted tests of messiahship—an individual who had in fact been discredited by an ignominious death. If he had failed to meet messianic standards while on earth, it is hardly surprising that there was difficulty in anticipating for him any future display of messianic dignity. Therefore Christian interpreters were obliged not only to justify the heretofore unheard-of procedure of identifying the man-Messiah with the heavenly Messiah; but if Jesus was the Messiah to be, it was not unreasonable to demand some foreshadowings of this fact in his earthly life. These necessities, as we shall presently see, were met by exhibiting, in what must have seemed at first—at least to Jews if not to Christians—a non-messianic career of Jesus on earth, elements that had messianic significance; and this ultimately meant the transference of his saving work from

the realm of eschatology into the domain of history.

Paul remarks that it was characteristic of Jews to demand "signs" in proof of the Christians' estimate of Jesus.[1] Evidently it was Jesus' death to which exception was taken. This seemed to Jews a mark of weakness, so they demanded signs of Jesus' power. But instead of pointing out evidences of power in Jesus' historical person, Paul replied that Christ crucified is the power of God—witness the resurrection and the charismatic endowments accompanying the propagation of the new faith. Similarly in synoptic tradition the demand for a sign during Jesus' lifetime is left unmet, so far as the actual request is concerned. The Jewish authorities sought a sign—more specifically "a sign from heaven"—but Jesus turned away impatiently with the curt reply, "to this generation no sign shall be given." Some substitutes were suggested in the tradition, such as the sign of Jonah, the signs of the times, or the sign of Jesus' resurrection; but early Christian tradition uniformly recognized that the particular type of sign demanded by the Jews as evidence that the earthly Jesus was to

[1] I Cor. 1:22 ff.

be identified with the expected Messiah could not be historically produced.[1]

What was the real sign from heaven which Jesus so uniformly refused his own generation? It can hardly be that Mark, for example, thought the Pharisees were asking for a miracle of the sort Jesus had already performed. There would not be anything distinctive about this, for they had already witnessed Jesus' miracles on various occasions. Their request was rather for a special demonstration "from heaven" which should leave no doubt in their minds that he was the final minister of salvation, the Messiah. There was one pre-eminent sign that would satisfy the Jews, namely, for Jesus to present himself riding upon the clouds in glory. This was the one supreme test, regarded on all hands as final, for a messiahship of the type Christians were claiming for Jesus. But this proof was of course not available for those of Jesus' own generation. Christian interpretation could not make this a matter of history but must treat it as an item of faith. Thus in the narrative of Mark the "leaven" of disbelief on the part of the Jewish leaders sets off to

[1] Mark 8:11–13; Matt. 16:1–4; 12:38 f.; Luke 11:16, 29; 12:54–56.

greater advantage the disciples' belief—tardy and faltering as it is—in Jesus' messiahship,[1] notwithstanding the unmessianic character of his career when judged by the standards of popular expectation. In Matthew and Luke, Pharisaic disbelief is similarly condemned as the trait of a generation which is "evil and adulterous."[2]

But how could the Pharisees be fairly upbraided for disbelief if they were not given a sign in support of faith? Christian apologists recognized this need, and offered, in place of the as yet impossible sign from heaven, other data which were held by believers to justify identifying the earthly Jesus with the future savior from heaven. Negatively, those features in Jesus' career which seemed to contradict this hope were explained away as divinely foreordained; while more positive evidences of Jesus' uniqueness were found in other features of his career. Not only was God's special sanction of him seen in his resurrection and his spiritual lordship over the community—the main pillars of the first Christians' faith—but early interpretation was able to exhibit sanc-

[1] Mark 8:14–21, 27–33.

[2] Matt. 12:39; 16:4; Luke 11:29.

tions from God during Jesus' lifetime, and also attestations of uniqueness given more immediately by Jesus himself.

This brought about a real demand for a "Life of Christ." The earliest efforts in this direction probably were made on Jewish soil and in a Jewish atmosphere, and the items set in the foreground of the narrative were naturally those best suited to show that the earthly Jesus was worthy of messianic honors. While he was still pre-eminently the savior to come, he had also accomplished at least a preliminary saving work while on earth. But as his coming was delayed, and interest in the realistic Jewish eschatology waned, still more did Christians realize the importance of finding the chief manifestation of Jesus' saving mission in his earthly life. This evolution was a gradual one, but it is clearly observable in the New Testament. At the beginning stands Paul, with his vivid forward look warning converts that the day is far spent and the night is at hand when all shall stand before the judgment-seat of God.[1] At the other extreme is the author of the Fourth Gospel, whose faith takes a backward

[1] Rom. 13:12; 14:10; cf. I Cor. 1:7 f.; 3:13; 4:5; II Cor. 5:10.

sweep to the time when Jesus first came forth from God to save the world by his work upon earth: "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou didst send."[1] In John, the Christians' gaze has been almost completely diverted from the Coming One to "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," which has already been revealed.

One of the first necessities of primitive interpretation was to counteract the popular belief that certain well-known features of Jesus' career were contrary to messianic faith. His death for instance must have occasioned much difficulty. Paul made this an essential item in God's scheme of salvation, the cornerstone of the gospel of redemption. He recognized that both Jews and gentiles took offense at this phase of the Messiah's career, but he personally saw in it a demonstration of the wisdom and power of God. His language implies that he was not the first to grasp this idea,[2] yet it is doubtful whether any of his predecessors had expounded it so vigorously. At first the disciples seem to have offered no apology for this event, other than to express

[1] John 17:3. [2] I Cor. 15:3.

their conviction that it had happened in accordance with the divine will as revealed in Old Testament prophecy. Thus it was an integral element in the scheme of salvation, even though no one chose to phrase it as Paul did, in the language of the Jewish sacrificial system.

Perhaps a further intimation of its importance for early times is to be seen in the fact that about one-third of the Gospel of Mark is devoted to the closing scenes of the last week of Jesus' life. And this seems, too, to be a primitive phase of tradition. Jesus does not figure here even as a worker of miracles, displaying messianic powers already bestowed upon him at baptism; he is rather a messianic claimant whose credentials are to be produced in the future. Paul said, in substance, that by death Jesus performed the last act preliminary to entering upon the final part of his messianic program; according to the passion narrative of Mark, Jesus was put to death because he had while on earth expressly asserted his right to play this future part. In either case the event had saving significance, in that it was one act in the divinely arranged program of the Savior. When Jesus' death was thus disposed of, the

way was open for a similar disposition of every troublesome feature in his career.

But God's interest in Jesus was not confined simply to those features in his life which at first sight seemed incongruous with messianic faith. Divine approvals of a positive sort were to be found in the story of Jesus' life. Whether Paul knew nothing of these, or whether he merely felt it unnecessary to go back beyond the resurrection for proof of Jesus' messianic dignity, is difficult to determine at this late date. But there were theologians, and some of them probably were contemporary with Paul, who recognized the desirability, and found themselves equal to the task, of presenting evidence from Jesus' lifetime in support of their messianic faith. Instead of pointing merely to the resurrection as the occasion when God had explicitly authenticated Jesus, they gave an account of a "transfiguration" near the close of Jesus' career when a foretaste of his approaching resurrection glory was vouchsafed to a few chosen disciples, and when the divine voice proclaimed him to be God's beloved Son whom the disciples were to "hear." It was thought by other interpreters that God had given similar testimony at Jesus' baptism; and, by

the time the tradition contained in the infancy narratives had taken form, it was discovered that God had explicitly indicated his approval of Jesus' earthly mission even before his birth. Finally, the writer of the Fourth Gospel conceives Jesus to have been the incarnation of the pre-existent, divine *logos*, sent from God.

For Christians these were veritable signs from heaven, but they were not directly available for outsiders. They had to be mediated by believers. While Jews were familiar with the Old Testament prophecies in which foreshadowings of Jesus' death were found, there was a wide difference between the current and the Christian interpretations of these Scriptures. Furthermore, God's approval of Jesus at transfiguration and at baptism had, at least in the earliest tradition, to be taken purely on the testimony of believers. Only in later forms of the narrative are such evidences made available for the public, as in the Matthean version of the baptism, where the voice speaks *about* Jesus rather than directly to him as in Mark. Also in the Fourth Gospel, John the Baptist had been divinely instructed regarding Jesus' messiahship, and the multitude were the auditors when God announced the glorification of the Son in

John 12:28 ff. But even had these items been in circulation earlier, it is doubtful whether they would have satisfied the actual demands of the situation. Not only would opponents ask for more objective proofs of messiahship from Jesus' own personal life, but Christians themselves must have felt a similar desire when once it was believed that Jesus' messiahship had been divinely attested during his earthly life, and that certain features in his earthly career were an integral part of his saving work.

One of the earliest passages expressing God's approval of Jesus contains the injunction "hear ye him."[1] This carried with it the idea of a unique message delivered by the Son. Nor could interpretation be satisfied with anything less than explicit statements from Jesus himself, if these could possibly be obtained, asserting his uniqueness. Furthermore, Jesus as the Son who already at baptism is the object of the Father's good pleasure must needs display in his career a special type of conduct. Hence more detailed evidences of Jesus' messiahship

[1] Mark 9:7; cf. Acts 3:22 f. It must have been an early interpretation which first placed God's authentication so late in Jesus' career, rather than at his baptism. It has indeed been suggested that the transfiguration story was originally a resurrection narrative (cf. Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci*, Berlin, 1903, p. 77).

are found in (1) his prophet-like teaching, (2) his specific messianic claims, and (3) his mighty works. These items are all of the nature of self-attestations on the part of Jesus, in comparison with those authentications given more immediately by God.[1]

Evidently Jesus' teaching was brought forward at a relatively early date to demonstrate his supremacy. In a synoptic passage usually thought to come from the earliest common-source material used in the composition of Matthew and Luke,[2] when messengers from John the Baptist request Jesus to testify concerning himself, the climax of his reply is, "The poor have the gospel preached to them, and blessed is he whosoever shall not find occasion for stumbling in me." As these words now stand in our gospels their original force apparently has been somewhat weakened by taking literally the previous statements about giving sight to the blind, healing the lame, cleansing the lepers, curing the deaf, and raising the dead.

[1] The latter apparently were the earlier interest, e.g., with Paul (cf. also Acts 2:32; 3:15) God raises Jesus, but in Mark Jesus simply "rises"; in Acts 2:22 Jesus' miracles are works which "God did by him" (cf. Matt. 12:28=Luke 11:20—a "Q" passage), but in Mark it is Jesus' own authority which stands in the foreground.

[2] Matt. 11:2–6=Luke 7:18–23.

In the first instance this language probably was intended to describe the beneficent qualities of Jesus' message, like that of the prophet Isaiah cited by Jesus in Luke 4:18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor, etc." Emphasis upon Jesus' prophetic preaching rather than upon his miracles, as the distinctive mark of his saving work, is characteristic of the primitive non-Markan source material. It is here that the men of Nineveh who "repented at the preaching of Jonah," and the queen of the south who came to "hear the wisdom of Solomon," are promised precedence over the men of Jesus' own generation in the day of judgment.[1] Similarly at the beginning of his public career, when it is suggested that he appeal to miracles in order to test his divine sonship, he emphatically refuses the challenge.[2] Not only are miracles of Jesus rarely mentioned in this section of gospel tradition, but his ability in

[1] Matt. 12:41 f.; Luke 11:31 f.

[2] Matt. 4:1–11=Luke 4:1–13. It is noteworthy that Mark slurs over this phase of the tradition, evidently feeling it to be inconsistent with the prominence given to miracles in the Markan narrative. Even the temptation incident has been retouched by Mark, seemingly in favor of the miracle interest. At least the ministration of angels has been introduced, while in the earlier source Jesus had positively refused to invoke their aid.

this respect is implied to be not essentially different from that of other righteous men in Israel.[1] As proof of his superiority, mighty works did not appeal to the framers of this primitive type of tradition so much as did the spiritual and prophetic quality of Jesus' teaching. This is a perfectly natural situation, for Jews did not find the uniqueness of their great men primarily in their ability to work miracles, but in the fidelity with which they uttered the word of God.

A similar method of showing that Jesus was to be identified with the Messiah to come is seen in Acts, chap. 3. His earthly career had not been one of brilliant messianic display, and his death had taken place in accordance with prophecy (vs. 18). He had figured as the suffering servant of God, who was later glorified through the disciples' witness to his resurrection and through miracles wrought in his name (vss. 13–15). In heaven he now awaited God's pleasure in bringing about the time for him to appear in his full messianic rôle (vs. 20). His earthly life had been "messianic" only in the sense that he was the prophet like unto Moses whose coming the great lawgiver had foretold. His mission, therefore, was to speak to Israel

[1] Matt. 12:27=Luke 11:19.

the word which should prove a blessing by turning them from their iniquities. It was Israel's fatal mistake not to have hearkened unto "that prophet" (vss. 23 and 26). Here again the very content of the tradition forbids that we credit the author of Acts with its first composition. The use of a source has to be assumed for this as for similar primitive elements in the Third Gospel.

The necessity of placing Jesus beside Moses and the prophets must have been early felt, particularly in Jewish circles. This interest is served by picturing Christianity's natal day as a time when the earth trembled and the Spirit, like fiery flames, came upon believers, with the result that all foreigners in Jerusalem at the time heard the gospel preached in their several tongues. The prototype of this scene is Mount Sinai trembling and aflame when the law is delivered to Israel, and when, according to Jewish Midrashim, the law had been proclaimed in seventy different languages to as many different nations, though accepted by none but Israel. Thus God acts as marvelously in the founding of Christianity as in the establishment of Judaism; and Moses figures much less significantly than does Jesus, whose heavenly

exaltation is itself the basis of the Spirit's activity. But even in Jesus' lifetime Moses and Elijah—representing the "Law" and the "Prophets"—appear in conversation with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Here Peter, who has been spokesman for the disciples in their recognition of Jesus' messiahship, now proposes to make three tabernacles, "one for thee, one for Moses, one for Elijah."[1] When the new religion became conscious of its own existence, its founder of necessity took precedence over the ancient Hebrew worthies.

This phase of Christian thinking inevitably grew in importance as Christianity remained for some time in close contact with Judaism. It was desirable to recall that Jesus' teaching had been superior to that of the rabbis, and that he had in fact excelled all scribes, sages, prophets, and lawgivers of old. It could be said of the scribe: "He will seek out all the wisdom of the ancients, and will be occupied in prophecies. He will keep the discourse of the men of renown, and will enter in amidst the subtilties of parables. He will seek out the hidden meaning of proverbs, and be conversant in the dark sayings of parables."[2] Yet more

[1] Mark 9:4 f. = Matt. 17:3 f. = Luke 9:30–33.

[2] Sir. 39:1–3.

could be said of Jesus. He was not merely an interpreter of other men's proverbs and parables, but was himself the author of teachings so subtle that even his own disciples understood him with difficulty and outsiders were completely mystified.[1] Other teachers might expound the wisdom of the older sages, but Jesus excelled even Solomon, the most highly esteemed of the Hebrew wise men.[2] Jesus' understanding of the prophets was not only superior to that of contemporary teachers, but he was himself the fulfilment of prophecy and the author of a new dispensation in which even the more lowly members were greater than the last and greatest of the prophets of Israel.[3]

He was also an authoritative expounder of the law, even to the extent of criticizing its enactments regarding, for example, sabbath observance and divorce.[4] Yet many early Christians did not feel that the new faith meant the abrogation of the law, and they regarded as least in the kingdom all who, like Paul, taught men to discard Mosaic injunctions. On the other hand, Jesus was the new messianic lawgiver

[1] Mark 4:9–12.

[2] Matt. 12:42=Luke 11:31.

[3] Matt. 11:9–11=Luke 7:26–28.

[4] Mark 2:27; 10:5 f.

who, by way of fulfilling rather than abrogating the Mosaic dispensation, placed his word above that which they of old time had spoken.[1] Hence Jesus was naturally described as exemplifying many superior traits of personality, surpassing even Moses. Josephus probably represents current Jewish opinion when he describes Moses as a prophet whose like had never been known, so that when he spoke you would think you heard the voice of God himself; while his life was so near to perfection that he had full command of his passions, and knew them only by name as perceiving them in others.[2] Ultimately Christian tradition was able to say of Jesus that "never man spake as this man" and no one was able to convict him of sin.[3] Christian interpreters were, from an early date, under pressure to give Jesus first place in the gallery of Israel's greatest worthies.

As a foreteller of coming events Jesus figures quite uniquely. It was very desirable that he should be thus presented to men of that age. The same Deuteronomic passage in which the primitive Christians found Moses' prediction of

[1] Matt. 5:21–48.

[2] *Ant.*, IV, viii, 49.

[3] John 7:46; 8:46.

Jesus also provided a test for determining the validity of any individual's claim to be the promised prophet: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken; that prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him."[1] It had to be shown that Jesus met this test, else it would have been vain for Christians to present him to the Jews as the fulfilment of Moses' prophecy. Accordingly gospel tradition notes that he predicted his death, his resurrection, the destruction of the temple, disaster for the Jewish nation, and his own return in glory—all items closely connected with his messianic program.

The desirability of presenting evidence of Jesus' predictive powers may have been enhanced by the siege and fall of Jerusalem. As Josephus looks back upon that disaster he notes many premonitory signs, and blames the Jews for not giving heed to these.[2] Among other things he affirms that soldiers had been seen running about among the clouds, which, he naïvely remarks, might seem doubtful were it not that those who actually saw the thing

[1] Deut. 18:22. [2] *War*, VI, v, 3.

bore testimony to its occurrence. There was also at Pentecost one year a quaking of the earth and a great noise followed by a supernatural, warning voice. But clearest and most terrible of all was the utterance of one Jesus, son of Ananus, who, four years before the war began, proclaimed woe upon Jerusalem, and upon the people, and upon the holy house. This he continued to cry for seven years and five months "without becoming hoarse or growing tired," until finally he was killed in the siege. Then Josephus concludes: "Now if any man will consider he will find that God takes care of mankind, and by all ways possible foreshadows to our race what is for their preservation." This doubtless was current belief in Josephus' day, though many Jews might not accept his specific application of the principle to reflect discreditably upon their leaders whom he describes as "men infatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider" the denunciations made to them by God.

We may say that Josephus found his signs and made his interpretation to suit his needs, but Christians also passed through the trying experiences of those days and were none the less under the compulsion of adjusting their

thinking to the historical events—events so terrible that they seemed to presage the end of the world. Since Jesus was believed to have stood in unique favor with God, and was the one to bring in the new age, it was very desirable that Christians, during the momentous events attending the siege and fall of Jerusalem, should recall such words of Jesus' as seemed to point to this event and to indicate the manner in which history would issue. It was fortunate for believers that they were able to recall Jesus' predictions of disasters, and to assure themselves that he believed these disasters to be merely preliminary to the consummation of his own kingdom.

We have already observed that Jesus' mighty works are not greatly emphasized in the early non-Markan tradition. They do, however, occupy a prominent place in the Gospel of Mark, particularly in the account of the Galilean ministry. While the specific need which first prompted a rehearsal of Jesus' miracles is somewhat uncertain, the pragmatic interest which they serve in the Markan narrative is quite evident. After baptism Jesus shows himself to be the Spirit-filled Son of God, who first resists Satan's attack and then goes forth to display his triumph over the forces of

this evil age by casting out demons, healing the sick, and transcending the limitations of nature generally. In this he is not merely exhibiting traits suggested by comparison with Old Testament worthies like Moses and Elijah. These individuals were on occasion granted the exercise of miraculous powers, but in Jesus' case this ability is more distinctly his own prerogative. There are intimations that in some of the tradition Jesus' power was less immediate. Peter at Pentecost describes Jesus as "a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you,"[1] and again in the Beelzebul incident Jesus affirms that he casts out demons "by the finger of God."[2] But in Mark's representation Jesus' self-sufficiency stands in the foreground, the only conditioning factor being that of "faith." Nor are Jesus' miracles here put forward primarily as "signs" to stimulate belief. In the Fourth Gospel they are precursors of faith; in Mark they are regularly the consequent of faith. Thus for the Second Evangelist Jesus' miracles are not merely messianic credentials, but are a beneficent outflowing from the person of the Messiah

[1] Acts 2:22. [2] Luke 11:20; cf. Matt. 12:27.

whose presence already brings the blessings of the new age within the reach of believers and near-believers. The disciples do not always understand the significance of Jesus' activity, but the demons do, for they perceive with alarm that God's deliverer is at hand. In the "temptation" he conquered their leader, Satan, and now he proceeds by exorcism, healings, and various triumphs over nature's limitations, to despoil Satan's domains.

This conception answers in a general way to the Jewish notion of the blessings to attend the Messiah's appearing, but it is phrased more immediately in terms of Christian experience within the primitive community. Paul believes that this present evil world is coming to naught through the victory of the Spirit in the lives of Christians, and that its final collapse will take place when the Messiah comes in glory. According to Mark the fatal shock was felt when Jesus began his saving ministry after his baptismal endowment by the Spirit.[1] At a time when

[1] Cf. the Lukan tradition, which represents Jesus as seeing the earnest of this victory in the miracle-working career of his disciples. When they return and report their success in exorcism —though significantly enough tradition merely generalizes on their activity in this respect prior to Jesus' death—he replies: "I was beholding [ἐθεώρουν] Satan falling as lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:17–20).

men thought themselves victims of all sorts of evil powers, it meant much to feel that the new religion gave the Spirit-filled believer victory over these foes. And the Markan representation of Jesus' activity will have served a most beneficial purpose in reminding the later generation that the spiritually endowed Messiah had exemplified ideally this conception of victory over the powers of the evil one.

While Jesus' significance for salvation is clearly the central interest of early interpretation, there doubtless were many subsidiary interests at work even in the early period. The individual bias of various writers, current Jewish as well as heathen religious notions, Christian use of the Old Testament, the political events of the age, the problems raised by the gentile mission, the developing organization of the church, the appearance of heretical teachers, these and similar forces will have left their stamp upon the growing evangelic tradition. For an accurate historical estimate of details in the gospel narratives, these items would need to be scrutinized more closely. But for the more general question of Jesus' existence they need not detain us, since they were clearly secondary and contributory to the

main interest of showing Jesus to be the well-authenticated mediator of the divine salvation. Whether primitive interpretation does or does not allow a place for the historical Jesus may be determined from a consideration of this central feature of early thinking. In comparison with this, other items are of minor importance.

Summarizing the results of the above survey, it appears that interest in recording fully the events of Jesus' career did not manifest itself at the very beginning of the new religious movement. At first, thought was directed mainly toward the future when Jesus would come to introduce the new age. Christian preachers announced the approach of the end, the transitoriness of present relationships, the near advent of the heavenly Messiah. But since they identified this coming one with Jesus, making belief in his messiahship the test of admission to the new community, they could not altogether dispense with the historical background even in their dogma. Especially was this true when they entered upon an evangelizing propaganda. For those whose belief rested upon a personal vision of the risen Lord, historical proofs were more a luxury than a necessity. But these individuals were rela-

tively few in number and belonged at the very beginning of the new religion. The spiritual gifts in the life of the community were more widely observable, and seem to have been put forward at an early date as attestations of the new faith. But all these experiential evidences needed to be supplemented, especially for outsiders. Accordingly reflection upon Jesus' earthly career enabled interpreters to claim for him evidences of the divine approval, and to set forth traits of his own which had high self-attesting worth. At the same time his genuinely saving activity became more and more closely associated with his career upon earth. Thus ultimately the historical horizon of interpretation was broadened to take in Jesus' entire life from the manger to the tomb.

It has seemed desirable to dwell at some length upon these pragmatic phases of early Christian thinking, since sometimes it is assumed that a full recognition of these interests necessarily carries with it a strong probability against, if not an outright denial of, Jesus' historicity. But the results of our inquiry point in a very different direction. In he first place they serve as a warning against the error of supposing that the framers of

Christian tradition in the early days always recorded all they knew about Jesus. We may sometimes be tempted to read our desire for full historical information back into the minds of the New Testament writers, and thus unjustly to affirm that they knew only so much of a historical Jesus as they recorded. This argument from silence is a most precarious one.

Moreover, variations or inconsistencies in different interpretations of Jesus do not necessarily imply non-historicity for his personality. Even if one could justly claim that the gospel picture of him is so truncated and distorted as to be impossible in reality, it would not follow that he never actually lived but only that primitive pragmatism was using him to serve its own interests. It is too much to expect that we can find a full and perfectly uniform portrait of the earthly Jesus in our present sources; nor, on the other hand, do these deficiencies compel us to pronounce the entire tradition historically worthless. The primitive theologians selected and preserved those features of the history which best served the interests of their day, even though the result was an incomplete picture of Jesus, from the standpoint of historical perfection.

Indeed it is very probable that interpreters in the early period would be compelled to adhere rather closely to history, in so far as they dealt with items which had come under the observation of their contemporaries. Only as time removed the actual occurrences into the shadows of the past could freely idealizing tendencies be brought into play. But it does not follow that Christians themselves would be deterred by this fact from taking a reverential attitude toward the risen Lord. They were not making the earthly Jesus the object of their worship; this they were rendering to the heavenly Christ, who had become what he was through the direct agency of God. Furthermore, the early believers found the ground for their own faith in personal experience rather than in historical data. It may be psychologically necessary to presuppose for them a high estimate of the earthly Jesus as a basis for the resurrection faith, but it is not absolutely essential for this estimate that they should previously have been conscious of Jesus' deity, nor does primitive tradition suggest that they were. The failure of the disciples to perceive in Jesus' personality while he was with them on earth the significance which they later attached

to it is quite generally recognized in the earliest parts of the gospels. In the first stage of the post-resurrection faith reverence was justified mainly by God's attestations of Jesus, and not until later reflection had done its work did believers come to appreciate that Jesus during his earthly career had really displayed qualities which made him worthy of the later faith. Then the disciples understood that they had been slow to comprehend his significance—a fact which they candidly admitted.

It follows therefore that they had a distinct recollection of an earthly individual with whom they had associated, yet without placing upon him at that time the particular form of interpretation which was later evolved under the inspiration of belief in his resurrection. We are not to infer that this individual had not strongly impressed himself upon the memory of the disciples, and that he was not held in high esteem by his associates, though this esteem may not have been fundamentally doctrinaire in type. Of course the earthly Jesus' personality may well have prompted some "doctrinal" reflections among his followers in those days of vivid messianic expectations, and the subject may have been discussed by Jesus himself, but any

conclusions to which such reflections may have led seem to have been pretty generally shattered by Jesus' death. That which remained with the disciples was the recollection of his words and the memory of his individuality, and these ultimately proved sufficiently substantial to support the superstructure of the resurrection faith and the doctrine of the heavenly Messiah.

While gospel tradition, arising under these circumstances, might seem to be primarily a history of early Christian doctrine, there were forces working both within and without the community compelling interpreters to adjust their thinking to the actual Jesus of history. Opponents of Christianity would not permit them to ignore the data of history, especially such items as could be made to reflect unfavorably upon the new faith. And within the community, where there was less need to prove doctrinal tenets, believers, in their daily fellowship with one another, naturally found themselves recalling scenes from the life of Jesus and words spoken by him while he had lived in personal association with those disciples who were now the inspiration of the new community-life.

It is therefore not intrinsically improbable that we shall be able to find important historical

information about Jesus in our present gospels, no matter how generally we admit the possibility of pragmatic influences at work in the period when the gospel tradition was taking shape. When, in our modern use of the New Testament writings, we are merely concerned to discover historical data regarding Jesus, we must attach most importance to those features of tradition which seem to have occasioned early interpreters difficulty, or which are not closely linked with the peculiar doctrinal interests of the primitive apologetic. If our aim were to ascertain every available historical item in Jesus' career it would be necessary to make detailed application of this test to the whole gospel history, but since our immediate purpose is merely to obtain historical evidence for belief in Jesus' actual existence, only the more primitive phases of the tradition—Paul's letters and the earliest gospel materials—need be examined minutely.

CHAPTER VI

THE PAULINE EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' EXISTENCE

The genuineness of the principal Pauline epistles is among the most generally accepted conclusions of what may be called modern critical opinion.[1] The evidence for this acceptance is usually regarded as exceptionally good. For instance, Clement of Rome, writing to the Corinthians in the last decade of the first century A.D., not only calls Paul a "notable pattern of patient endurance" but exhorts his readers to peruse again "the epistle of the

[1] The status of present opinion is too well known to need detailed statement here. The extreme views of B. Bauer and of the Dutch school are quite generally discarded. Steck (*Der Galaterbrief*, Berlin, 1888), though he admits the possibility of a few Pauline fragments in Romans, has not won adherents for his skeptical opinions. The partition hypotheses of, e.g., Völter (*Die Komposition der paulinischen Briefe*, Tübingen, 1890) and R. Scott (*The Pauline Epistles*, New York, 1909), are not looked upon with even partial favor among specialists in this field. The results of the Tübingen criticism, reworked to meet the requirements of later investigation, leave not only Galatians, I and II Corinthians, and Romans as unquestionably Pauline, but also Philippians and I Thessalonians. Colossians, Ephesians, are II Thessalonians are nowadays less widely rejected than formerly, and even the Pastorals are thought to contain some Pauline elements.

blessed Paul" which he wrote them in "the beginning of the gospel," and in which he charged them to avoid all party spirit.[1] Here is clearly a reference to our canonical First Corinthians. Furthermore, Clement's letter often shows in thought and language very strong resemblances to Paul's writings.[2] The evidence of Ignatius, from the first quarter of the second century, is less specific; but Marcion, a few years later, is a most significant witness. He attached so much value to the principal Pauline letters that he would make them his main scriptural authority; and the rest of the church, while it regarded Marcion as a heretic, did not dispute his high estimate of these writings, although it did not hold to them quite so exclusively as Marcion did. By the end of the century several available sources of information

[1] Clem. 5:5 ff.; 47:1 ff.

[2] As an example compare Paul's thought and phraseology in I Cor., chap. 13, with Clem. 49:1–5: *Ὁ ἔχων ἀγάπην ἐν Χριστῷ ποιησάτω τὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ παραγγέλματα. τὸν δεσμὸν τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ θεοῦ τίς δύναται ἐξηγήσασθαι; τὸ μεγαλεῖον τῆς καλλονῆς αὐτοῦ τίς ἀρκετὸς ἐξειπεῖν; τὸ ὕψος εἰς ὃ ἀνάγει ἡ ἀγάπη ἀνεκδιήγητόν ἐστιν. ἀγάπη κολλᾷ ἡμᾶς τῷ θεῷ· ἀγάπη καλύπτει πλῆθος ἁμαρτιῶν· ἀγάπη πάντα ἀνέχεται, πάντα μακροθυμεῖ· οὐδὲν βάναυσον ἐν ἀγάπῃ, οὐδὲν ὑπερήφανον· ἀγάπη σχίσμα οὐκ ἔχει, ἀγάπη οὐ στασιάζει, ἀγάπη πάντα ποιεῖ ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ· ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐτελειώθησαν πάντες οἱ ἐκλεκτοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ· δίχα ἀγάπης οὐδὲν εὐάρεστόν ἐστιν τῷ θεῷ.*

bear similar testimony to the Pauline authorship of this part of the New Testament.

Yet this external evidence which appeals so strongly to many investigators is easily set aside as itself spurious by those who deny the genuineness of the literature traditionally connected with Paul's name. Doubtless this procedure seems arbitrary and subjective to one who is accustomed to weigh all the historical evidence with care, nevertheless the type of argument which is usually directed against the historicity of Jesus and of Paul does not seem sensitive to statistics of this sort. Consequently any attempt to meet this skeptical argument on its own ground must proceed mainly from considerations, perhaps more or less general and a priori, based upon the content of the literature in question. Here lie before us certain documents which purport to belong to a definite historical setting. On the strength of the internal evidence do the probabilities seem to favor the genuineness of this representation, or does close examination show that the picture is a later fabrication depicting an idealized period in the past? We may present a few considerations which seem to us to turn the scales decisively in favor of genuineness.

One of the first canons of a pseudonymous writer is that the individual impersonated shall take the point of view and think the thoughts of the actual writer, and of the age to which he belongs. His primary motive is to claim the support of a great name for his own opinions. Now the Pauline literature contains elements which do not answer to this situation. In the first place, the realistic eschatology credited to Paul, whose active career is pictured as belonging near the middle of the first century A.D., will hardly have been invented at a later date when subsequent history had proved the falsity of such expectations. Yet this idea is pervasive in the writings which are assumed to be put forward here in Paul's name. The Romans are told that the night is far spent and the day is at hand when all shall stand before the judgment seat.[1] Marriage is discouraged among the Corinthians because of the shortness of the time;[2] they are commended for their attitude in "waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ," and are exhorted to refrain from judging one another in view of the near approach of the final judgment—"judge nothing

[1] Rom. 13:12; 14:10; cf. II Cor. 5:10.

[2] I Cor. 7:29 ff.

before the time, until the Lord come."[1] In the closing words of the first letter they are reminded of the immediateness which characterized the primitive hope as expressed in the phrase *marana tha*. Speaking of the Philippians, Paul is confident that God who has begun a good work in them "will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ," further Paul expects them to remain "void of offence unto the day of Christ" and encourages them to stand fast confident that "the Lord is at hand."[2] The Thessalonians are called to serve the true God and to "wait for his son from heaven which delivereth us from the wrath to come," and they are advised to live a holy life that they may stand blameless before God "at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints," for his coming will be sudden like that of a thief in the night. The hope is for those that are now alive who are to be caught up in the air to meet the Lord, and Paul closes his letter with the pious wish that their "spirit and soul and body be preserved entire without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."[3] History

[1] I Cor. 1:7 ff.; 4:5.

[2] Phil. 1:6, 10; 4:5.

[3] I Thess. 1:10; 3:13; 4:15–18; 5:2, 23.

proved that these vivid expectations of the end of the world were not to be realized, and an impersonator will hardly have created for his hero ideas that would discredit him in the eyes of a later generation.[1]

Against the hypothesis of pseudonymity we may set also the minute biographical details of the epistles. Sometimes data are given purposely to tell the story of Paul's life, as when the

[1] Belief in the immediateness of Jesus' return gradually became less vivid as time wore on. Even within the New Testament period this change is marked. Paul looks for the coming soon, expecting, until toward the close of his life, at least, to see it in his own day. Mark thinks "some" of Jesus' personal followers will live to see the day (9:1; 13:30), but before it comes the gospel must be preached to all the nations (13:10). Though no one may know the exact time, the tribulation attending the siege and fall of Jerusalem is a premonition of the end which is to come suddenly (13:24–37). The writers of Matthew and Luke have a similar idea, though a little farther postponed. The former changes Mark's "in those days after that tribulation" to "immediately after the tribulation of those days" (Matt. 24:29), while in Luke a period of some length subsequent to the fall of Jerusalem must be awaited "until the times of the gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). The writer of II Peter 3:8–10 apologized for the delay by asserting that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." In the Fourth Gospel the idea of a literal return has disappeared and the coming of Jesus in spiritual form as the Paraclete has taken its place—an idea which later interpreters have often tried to read back into the Synoptic Gospels and the Pauline letters. This whole progression of thought throws an interesting light on the primitive character and the genuineness of the notions credited to Paul.

Galatians are informed of his career from the time of his conversion until the meeting at Jerusalem;[1] but more commonly the mention of his doings is entirely subordinate to the main line of thought. For example, he briefly notes in closing his letter to the Romans that he is on the point of going up to Jerusalem with a gift for the saints, and after fulfilling this mission he hopes to proceed to Rome.[2] He also tells the Corinthians in a few closing words that he hopes to come to them by way of Macedonia, though at present he is in Ephesus where he will remain until Pentecost.[3] The list of these details could be enlarged, if necessary, and they are all the more significant because they usually come in quite incidentally and show no disposition on the part of the author to give a full account of the apostle's career. Had an impersonator wished to make Paul tell his own life-story we can easily imagine that he may have been sufficiently skilful to invent details, but under those circumstances the information would surely have been more uniformly distributed and its lifelike quality less pronounced. The very incompleteness of

[1] Gal. 1:15—2:1.

[2] Rom. 15:25.

[3] I Cor. 16:5–9.

the material as a whole, together with the exactness of detail at certain points, even where the information conveyed is relatively unimportant, seems a strong credential for the genuineness of these letters.

A similar inference may be drawn from the realistic elements in the general historical situation. How strongly one feels the heart-throb of reality in Paul's passionate appeal to the Galatians not to apostatize from the true faith; or in the more extensive Corinthian correspondence regarding living problems in the primitive church! The personal element is particularly pronounced. One has only to place the Pauline epistles beside Acts, to feel the difference in spirit between Paul's own representation of the events and the description of his activity by a subsequent narrator. Having once met Paul in his capacity as a Christian missionary in Acts one knows what to expect of him on all future occasions; he moves on with stately tread, always presenting to view the same somewhat stereotyped features. There is variety, to be sure, but it is the type of variety one finds in the colors of a portrait rather than in the changing aspects of real life. In Paul's letters, on the other hand, there is

no conventionalized portrait of his personality. He appears there as one who is vitally influenced by actual experience, making a normal response through the free play of changing moods.

To illustrate this point, according to Acts he goes up to Jerusalem at the instigation of the church in Antioch to discuss the problem of the gentile Christians' obligations to the law; the facts of the gentile mission are calmly rehearsed, the decision is made in favor of Paul's position, he retires to Antioch, and then moves on quietly to further evangelization. We are given no hint of the anxiety he felt on this occasion, nor do we appreciate the personal energy he expended on the problem. But turn to Galatians and how different is the situation! Anxiety for the future welfare of his brethren in the gentile churches prompts him to push the question to a decision in Jerusalem; in order to make the problem pointed, and thus to avoid future misunderstandings, he puts Titus forward as a test case; with nervous energy he presses the issue almost to the point of belligerence; he wins the decision, but his joy is short-lived, for, on returning to Antioch, new conditions develop which result not only

in a break with Peter but in the severance of relations with his friend and former traveling companion, Barnabas. We are left at last with no picture of an ideal victory for Paul but with a very realistic situation: his efforts had at first seemed successful, in the flush of victory new troubles broke out, the result was not only the antagonism of the Jerusalem church but separation from Peter and Barnabas, and to what extent Paul was able still to hold the sympathies of the Antiochian church may be questioned. Here is no idealization in favor of either party, but a break which shows its raw edges just as we are wont to find them in real life. So it is throughout Paul's entire career as portrayed in his letters.

To a remarkable degree his personality, as revealed in these writings, rings true to reality. He represents himself as possessing a strongly emotional temperament; he is exceptionally efficient in speaking with tongues, he is on occasion caught up into the seventh heaven, visions and revelations of the Lord are often his privilege. And this is the type of person he proves to be in the ordinary relations of daily life. On hearing of the trouble in Galatia his emotions are deeply stirred, he calls down

anathemas upon the disturbers and upbraids the Christians for their fickleness, then he pleads in gentle tones with his "little children" for whom he is again in travail. The same interplay of feelings is even more strongly marked in the story of his relations with the Corinthians. Now he threatens the rod, but in the next breath he expresses the hope that they will permit him to come to them "in love and a spirit of gentleness"; and when the crisis becomes exceptionally critical instead of visiting them in severity he writes a letter "out of much affliction" and "with many tears." At one time he commends himself in extravagant language, and then his sensitive nature seems to recoil and he pleads with his readers to bear with him "in a little foolishness," since circumstances compel him to defend his rights as an apostle. Later in his career, when his own fate seems to be hanging in the balances, he alternates between despair and hope in truly normal fashion and, as he reflects upon the possibilities for the future, two conflicting desires rise within him: to depart and be with Christ is better for him, yet to abide in the flesh is more needful for the churches. In all this one sees not a made-up character of the stage but an

actual person who traversed wide ranges of human experience.

Finally, the realistic character of Paul's work, the vigor of his thought, and the uniqueness of his letters show him to have been a genuinely vital factor in the propagation of the new religion. If the Pauline letters are spurious, we must assume a character of the past known to the real author and to his constituency as worthy of the rôle here assigned Paul; or we must suppose the real author possessed a creative genius which would surely leave its mark on the life, as well as on the literature, of the time. But where do we find all this more fittingly than in a genuine Paul himself? The task of fabricating the material which lies before us in chapter after chapter of these letters, where the definiteness and vividness of an actual situation show behind every sentence, is quite inconceivable.[1] The force

[1] Speaking of the failure of the extreme negative criticism to supply an adequate historical setting for the phenomena, J. Weiss says: "Woher diese Stoffe und Gedanken, wer hat denn die Person des Paulus und seine Briefe ersonnen, wer war dieser Genius? Eine plötzliche anonyme Produktivität erhebt sich, ein Konfluxus von Geist und Begeisterung wächst aus dem Boden, man weiss nicht, woher er kommt. Und das alles muss in wenigen Dezennien fertig geworden sein, denn es ist dann da und lässt sich nicht mehr ableugnen." Further: "Man sollte

of one strong and distinctive personality predominates throughout the main part of the Pauline literature, whether this individual is viewed from the standpoint of his activity, or in his capacity of thinker and writer. That an impersonator should create a character so unique, and yet so verisimilar in all the relations of life, that minute yet sometimes insignificant details about him should be told without any attempt to depict his career in full, that he should be assigned some phases of thought which history in the next generation was compelled to set aside, is scarcely within the range of possibility. The historicity of Paul and the genuineness of the principal Pauline letters are supported by the data of both external and internal testimony; and if, say, only the letter to the Galatians, or one of the Corinthian epistles, is genuine, the existence of a historical Jesus would seem to be amply attested.

But it may be urged that Paul had no per-

einmal diesen Radikalen die Aufgabe stellen, ein oder zwei Kapitel, etwa 2. Kor. 4 oder 10, aus der Seele eines Fälschers heraus Wort für Wort zu erklären—dann würden sie schon merken, wie unmöglich das ist, wie gänzlich unschablonenhaft und ungekünstelt, wie springend und augenblicksmässig hier alles ist."—*Jesus von Nazareth*, pp. 94 and 100.

sonal knowledge of the earthly Jesus, and that his contact with the early Jerusalem community of Christians was so slight that he would not really know whether their preaching about Jesus concerned a historical person or an anthropomorphized god. In fact it is asserted that Paul himself is the real founder of Christianity, which, on this view, is essentially a speculative system paying little attention to the earthly Jesus. This opinion, as illustrated in Wrede's *Paulus*,[1] is triumphantly reiterated by those who wish to depreciate the significance of Paul as a witness to Jesus' existence.

Certainly Paul claimed to be preaching a gospel which looked to no human source for its authentication, but which had been received by him directly from the heavenly Christ. Yet this bold claim to independence was made at a time when the apostle was under fire from his opponents who were ready on the slightest pretext to interpret his contact with earlier Christians as evidence of inferiority. Here clearly it is doctrine and practice as taught by Paul, and not the amount or reliability of his information about an earthly Jesus, that are the subject of discussion, and there is nothing

[1] Tübingen, 1904; English tr., *Paul*, (Boston, 1908).

in Paul's assertion of independence to exclude the possibility of his having derived a large stock of information about Jesus from the first disciples. His debt to them may have been much greater than he himself realized, since whatever he received had been thoroughly assimilated by means of his own vigorous spirituality. For the first seventeen (or fourteen) years of his career as a Christian he seems to have lived in harmonious relations with the earlier Christians, and he certainly was well enough aware of their way of thinking, and of the value attached by Christendom to their teaching, to realize the desirability of coming to an understanding with them on missionary problems.

Yet it is said, If he had information about Jesus why did he not use it? How do we know that he did not? The occasions which called forth his letters were not such as to demand detailed exposition of the life of Jesus. Wrede takes Paul's failure to appeal, in his controversy with opponents, to Jesus' free attitude toward legalism, as evidence that Paul knew nothing of Jesus' antilegalism. This inference is hardly justified. Jesus' criticism of rabbinism was not aimed primarily at the abolition

of traditional ordinances, and in fact the real precedent of Jesus on the question in debate in Paul's day was against Paul, who knew and made it an item in his interpretation that Jesus had been subject to the requirements of the law. Paul may indeed have felt that he was following a line of conduct which harmonized with the true spirit of Jesus' ethical criticism of current legalism; but on the practical issue, as it came up on the missionary field, Paul was breaking new ground. Unquestionably his type of dogma in general, and the needs his epistles were written to serve, did not call for emphasis upon the life-history of the earthly Jesus, but to interpret this silence as meaning utter ignorance is not justified. A similar argument would make the author of Acts ignorant of Jesus' earthly career, but we happen to know that this same writer composed the Gospel of Luke.

And is Paul so completely silent? Drews thinks so, and goes to the extreme of saying that a reader who had not prejudged the question would not be likely to suppose that the apostle ever thought of an earthly Jesus. A few passages from the more important Pauline writings may show the impropriety of this

statement. Sometimes "the Lord" is referred to in a way that suggests knowledge of events and teachings in the lifetime of Jesus.[1] Furthermore Paul speaks of Jesus as "born of the seed of David, according to the flesh."[2] In contrast with Adam, whose disobedience brought condemnation upon his descendants, Jesus is the "man" through whom God's grace abounds toward believers.[3] He was crucified, and this fact became for Paul the cornerstone of interpretation.[4] Specific events in connection with his death—the last meal eaten with his disciples and his betrayal—were remembered.[5] Paul also knew of a company of followers whose sadness was turned into joy by an experience which they regarded as evidence of Jesus' resurrection;[6] and these events had taken place in recent times, Paul having personal acquaintance with relatives and friends of this Jesus.[7] The reality of an earthly Jesus, according to these sample passages, seems to be an indisputable presupposition of Paul's thinking, a reality both for him and for his con-

[1] I Cor. 7:10, 12, 25; 9:14; 11:23; I Thes. 4:15.

[2] Rom. 1:3.

[3] Rom. 5:12 ff.

[4] I Cor. 2:2.

[5] I Cor. 11:23 ff.

[6] I Cor. 15:5 ff.

[7] Cf. I Cor. 15:6; Gal., chap. 2.

temporaries. Although he speculates boldly upon the question of Jesus' significance, emphasizing on the one side his pre-existence and on the other his heavenly exaltation, nevertheless Jesus' appearance upon earth in truly human form, the lowliness and naturalness of his life, and his submission to death on the cross are basal historic facts without which Paul's interpretation of Jesus would have been impossible.

But may not Paul have been misled by his predecessors in the new faith, and so have wrongly imagined that they spoke of an earthly Jesus? Notwithstanding alleged independence on Paul's part, his life touched that of the primitive community at too many points to allow us to suppose that he was not accurately acquainted with their belief on this point. The evidence of this contact is furnished by Paul's own letters, and this testimony is all the more significant because it comes for the most part from a time when his relation to the primitive church was being taken by his opponents as *prima facie* proof of his inferiority. As Paul tells us, before his conversion he had persecuted the Christians most bitterly, a fact which implies his familiarity with their life and

thought. It has sometimes been inferred that his claim to have "seen Jesus our Lord"[1] and his incidental remark to the Corinthians that "we have known Christ after the flesh"[2] are proof that he had actually seen the earthly Jesus.[3] This of course is not intrinsically impossible, but Paul will hardly have claimed authentication for his apostleship (I Cor. 9:1) from acquaintance with Jesus at that time; while "we have known Christ after the flesh" may imply no more than such knowledge of Christ's earthly career as Christians in general possess.

Paul's first friendly contact with the early followers of Jesus was probably in Damascus. There he seems to have remained for some time, in association with those Christians who had previously been prominent enough to attract his attention as a persecutor. Then followed his first journey to Jerusalem, where for two weeks he visited with Peter in particular and the Jerusalem church in general. When later he moved on into the regions of "Syria and Cilicia" his connections with the Palestinian community

[1] I Cor. 9:1. [2] II Cor. 5:16.

[3] J. Weiss, in his *Paulus und Jesus* (Berlin, 1909; English tr., *Paul and Jesus*, London and New York, 1909), contends vigorously for this interpretation of II Cor. 5:16.

were by no means entirely severed. The Judean churches learned of and rejoiced in his work. Later he was associated in missionary activity with Barnabas who seems to have been intimately connected with the first disciples. Then Silas, another member of the early Jerusalem church, became Paul's traveling companion. The Jerusalem council and Peter's visit to Antioch again brought Paul into intimate contact with those who had known Jesus personally. John Mark, whom tradition connects so closely with Palestine, was also Paul's fellow-worker at a later date. With these individuals of note, and a host of others unknown to us by name, Paul came into most intimate contact, a contact which must not only have given him an intimate acquaintance with the early tradition, but which must also have made it impossible for him to mistake a primitive doctrine about an anthropomorphized god for belief in the actual existence of a historical individual.

We must admit that Paul stood too near to the age which professed to know Jesus, to be successfully hoodwinked on the historical question. If Jesus never lived it is not at all probable that even the most enterprising propagandists could have succeeded in persuading

Paul of the reality of this mythical person within the generation to which Paul himself belonged. But another possibility presents itself. Did he not deliberately create this historical character to suit his own scheme of interpretation; instead of being deceived was he not playing the part of a myth-maker? The absence from his letters of any effort to argue for the historicity of Jesus, which would surely be a matter of dispute at least with the opponents of Christianity, together with the prevailing acknowledgment that a historical person had been known by certain leaders of the new movement before Paul's conversion, seems an overwhelming objection to this supposition. Not only does Paul everywhere take for granted the existence of a Jesus whose memory is fresh in men's minds, but a good part of his attention is given to resisting opponents who claim superiority over him because they have been, or have received their commission from men who had been, personal companions of Jesus—a fact which Paul never denies, though he disputes the legitimacy of the inference regarding superiority which they deduce from the fact. Paul would scarcely have engaged so seriously in the controversy

with the legalists, or have had so much anxiety for the possible outcome of the Judaizers' efforts to undo his work on gentile soil, if the chief credential of the "pillars," namely, their claim to have known Jesus personally, was all a fiction.

Another important fact, bearing upon the present problem, has been brought out by the recent Paul *versus* Jesus controversy. We can no longer treat Paul as a theologian only, nor was his Christianity merely an elaborate scheme of dogma. Beside these we must place Paul the religious individual, and the Christian life of personal piety in which the apostle and his predecessors share a common heritage from Jesus' own personal life.[1] Indeed in the pious life of Jesus' first disciples may Paul have seen for the first time the demonstration of that power which ultimately conquered his Pharisean hatred and won the devotion of his heart and life. To cite Wellhausen, whom the radicals are fond of quoting as a champion of skepticism in matters of gospel criticism:

> Jesus continued to live not only in the dogma but also in the ethics of his community, and their pious life in imitation of him had perhaps even more attracting

[1] Cf. Jülicher, *Paulus und Jesus* (Tübingen, 1907); A. Meyer, *Wer hat das Christentum begründet, Jesus oder Paulus?* (Tübingen, 1907); J. Weiss, *op. cit.*

power than the preaching about the crucified and risen one. Before this one appeared to him at Damascus, Paul had, no doubt from the impression which the persecuted Christians made upon him, already in his heart the goad against which he was vainly trying to kick.[1]

From all these data we are able to deduce but one conclusion. Not only is Paul a genuine personality who strongly impressed himself upon the life of his time, and some of whose thoughts are preserved for us in fragments of correspondence with his churches, but the historicity of Jesus is also a prerequisite to Paul's Christian life and work. While the apostle freely interpreted, and at times no doubt greatly idealized, the person of Jesus, there never was a time when to deny the reality of Jesus' earthly career would not have been a fatal shock to Paul's entire interpretative scheme. But such a disaster was in that day out of the question, for the age to which Paul belonged held the generation which had witnessed the career of Jesus and had experienced the force of his personality in its own life. Consequently his personal conduct became the model and the inspiration for conduct in the new community. Nor was this influence con-

[1] *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (Berlin, 1905, p. 114).

fined to those who had associated with him on earth; it was felt by future converts, of whom Paul was a conspicuous example. He strenuously emulated this type of life himself and strove constantly to inculcate it among the new converts to the faith. His exhortation to the Corinthians, in speaking against the self-seeking spirit, "be ye imitators of me even as I also am of Christ,"[1] is expressive of that spirit of service for "the profit of the many" which characterized Christianity from the first, and which was consistently traced back to the life of its founder who, on calling disciples, had not offered them enticing rewards, but had given them an opportunity to become fishers of men, and had inspired them with the ideal of self-giving service: "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister, and whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all."

[1] I Cor. 11:1.

CHAPTER VII

THE GOSPEL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' EXISTENCE

It is self-evident that the gospels, in their account of Jesus, purport to portray the career of a historical individual. It is equally clear that the primitive assembly of believers, as described in the Book of Acts, included individuals who had been personally associated with Jesus during his life upon earth. As the horizon widens to take in growing missionary activities, the opinions of those leaders who had known the earthly Jesus become, because of their connection with him, a norm for measuring Christian doctrine and practice. Throughout these writings the reality of Jesus' existence seems to be a fundamental presupposition. Are we to treat this as a genuine representation, or may it appear on closer inspection that the figure of Jesus fades out when brought into the brighter light of critical scrutiny? It should be remembered that our immediate aim is not to determine the full content of reliable information about Jesus, but only to ask whether these

writings testify at all reliably to the bare fact of his existence.

The radicals uniformly contend that these documents are practically worthless witnesses on these questions. Or, in so far as their testimony is reliable, it even favors a denial of Jesus' historicity. Already we have remarked that this opinion is not defended by extensive argument but is affirmed almost as though it were an indisputable fact. This treatment of the subject gives no adequate idea of the actual results of modern gospel criticism. Although many perplexing questions have been raised, and much uncertainty is still felt regarding some items in the tradition, critical study has not itself reached the extreme of skepticism represented by the modern radicals. They, however, assert that the critics fail to push their results to a logical conclusion, which would mean, it is said, that the gospels and Acts would not be given any historical recognition. Not only are these works held to be tendency writings throughout, but the date of their composition is brought down so late that any connection with the actual history of a Jesus who is supposed to have lived in the first quarter of the first century A.D. becomes altogether problematic.

The gospels themselves, it is true, do not explicitly state the date of their origin, nor do they define the situation to which they belong. Only in the case of the Fourth Gospel is any indication of authorship given, and even there it stands in the appendix.[1] In these respects the gospels are in sharp contrast with the usual style of pseudepigraphic writings. Everything indicates that they appeared as perfectly ingenuous works whose claim to a hearing rested upon the supposed truthfulness and serviceability of their contents. Not until tradition labeled them with apostolic or near-apostolic names, and invested them with a unique dignity, did the notion of an authoritative gospel literature arise. When once this happened, the soil was prepared for a crop of pseudepigraphic writings whose authors thought to win a hearing for their opinions by putting them forth in the assumed garb of apostolic tradition. It is a striking testimony to the relatively early date of our canonical gospels that they are so free from the earmarks of pseudepigraphy. Today it may seem a great misfortune that they do not bear definite self-attestation to their author and date, yet we may console ourselves with the thought that

[1] 21:24.

this very lack shows them to have been pioneers, belonging to that formative period of Christianity when the things of which they speak were more or less common property and did not need any artificial authentication.

As to the exact dates of the several gospels, the testimony of early Christian writers is not so explicit as it is for Paul's epistles—a fact which seems to imply a later date for the rise of the gospel literature. Moreover the internal indicia, which in Paul's letters enable one to fix dates and places with comparative certainty, are almost entirely lacking in the gospels. Yet both external and internal testimony yields some substantial results regarding the time and manner of their origin. Thereby they become possible witnesses to the life and work of a historical Jesus.

In the last quarter of the second century several writers of unquestionable reliability bear united testimony to the existence of the gospels, and also to the high esteem in which they had come to be held. Irenaeus' testimony on this point is very clear,[1] and in the Muratorian

[1] It seems superfluous to cite references in detail, since these are usually given in full in works on the origin of the New Testament; e.g., Stanton, *The Gospels as Historical Documents*. Part I (New York, 1904).

Canon the four gospels were evidently enumerated at the beginning of the list of New Testament books. About the same time Tatian incorporated them into his *Diatessaron*, and the Sinaitic Syriac translation is also commonly assigned to this same period. Papias' oft-quoted remarks about Matthew and Mark are of still earlier date. Justin Martyr, writing in the middle of the century, makes extensive use of gospel language and speaks of "memoirs" written by apostles. He specifies memoirs of Peter, but is not more definite on the question of the gospels' origin. It may be that tradition had not yet fully fixed itself in this matter, or possibly Justin assumed that his readers would have no interest in these details. Marcion used the Third Gospel, and presumably knew the others. Certainly Ignatius and Polycarp were familiar with evangelic tradition, though they make no definite mention of an individual gospel. Clement of Rome, on two occasions, cites teachings of Jesus which resemble gospel language but which are not sufficiently exact to be taken for quotations. From this survey it is clear that the gospels were in existence before the close of the second century. They had, moreover, attained the status of canonical

literature, and had even been given first place in the New Testament collection.

This may not seem to carry us far toward establishing their reliability as witnesses for events in the first three decades of the first century. But we are not to imagine that the above data convey any adequate idea of the actual extent to which tradition about Jesus was known and used in the first half of the second century. The external evidence now known to us pertains more particularly to the history of the gospels' rise to prominence than to the fact of their existence. Since they had not been issued under the egis of any special authority, it was only gradually that they won their way to general recognition. We remember that Ignatius encountered Christians who were unwilling to accept any written authorities except the "charters," seemingly meaning the Old Testament, yet these individuals were doubtless acquainted with all the essentials of gospel tradition as commonly repeated and interpreted in public preaching and teaching. Their demurrer is not a rejection of gospel tradition but a hesitation about placing any writing on a plane with the Old Testament as "Scripture." Thus it appears that the scanti-

ness of reference to the gospels in the early second century is no fair measure of the probability or improbability of their existence at that time.

The fact seems to be that many persons in this period prized oral tradition above written records, probably because the oral teaching represented not only essentially everything contained in the gospels, but being more fluid in character it was more easily adapted to individual needs and local conditions. Papias is reported to have said that in his youth he did not think he could derive so much profit from the contents of books as from "the utterance of a living and abiding voice." In the first quarter of the second century men were still living who had been personal associates of the apostles, and as tradition probably had not yet officially stamped the gospels with apostolic authority, it was not surprising that the "living and abiding voice" in the first generation after the apostles should have been more generally popular than written records which had originally been designed for some given set of local circumstances. But as time passed the "voice" became silent and the written word was allowed to speak. Marcion, by differentiating the

notion of authoritative Christian writings, probably gave added stimulus to this tendency, especially since Christianity was compelled to wrest its valued traditions from the hands of the heretic. At any rate, from Marcion's time on the recognition of authoritativeness for Christian writings is much more pronounced than in the previous generation. Had Marcion come a half-century earlier we might today know much more than we now do about the early existence of our New Testament books.

Early tradition does in reality connect the rise of the gospels, so far as Mark and Matthew are concerned, very closely with the age of Jesus. According to Eusebius, Papias, in his expositions of the "sayings" of the Lord, stated on the authority of the "Elder":

> Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately everything that he remembered, without however recording in order what was either said or done by Christ. For neither did he hear the Lord, nor did he follow him; but afterward, as I said [attended], Peter who adapted his instructions to the needs [of his hearers] but had no design of giving a connected account of the Lord's "sayings." So then Mark made no mistake while he thus wrote down some things as he remembered them, for he made it

his one care not to omit anything that he heard, or to set down any false statement therein.[1]

Other traditions connect the writing of this gospel with Rome, soon after Peter is supposed to have arrived there, or else after his death. All this testimony implies the spread of Christianity in the gentile world before the date of Mark's composition, which corresponds with certain data in this gospel indicating that the work was intended for non-Jewish readers.[2]

Papias says further, in this same connection, that "Matthew composed the sayings in the Hebrew language and each one interpreted them as he could." Matthew's collection of "sayings" seems to be identified by Eusebius with the Gospel of Matthew, of which he says: "Matthew, after preaching to Hebrews, when about to go also to others, committed to writing in his native tongue the gospel that bears his name, and so by his writing supplied to those whom he was leaving the loss of his presence."[3] Clement of Alexandria, on the authority of the "Preaching of Peter," thinks the apostles did not leave Palestine until twelve

[1] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, III, 39.

[2] E.g., explanations of Jewish terms, places, customs, etc., 3:17; 5:41; 7:2 ff.; 7:34; 10:46; 12:42; 13:3; 14:2, 32; 15:42.

[3] *Hist. Eccl.*, III, 24.

years after Jesus' death, which would fix the date at about 42 A.D.[1] According to these witnesses it would appear that the First Gospel was originally written in Hebrew (or Aramaic)[2] by the apostle Matthew before the year 42 A.D. Thus popular tradition placed the composition of Matthew, or at least a Matthean collection of "sayings," at an early date and in a Palestinian setting; while Mark's Gospel was thought to belong to a slightly later date, but yet to have a close connection with the primitive tradition as reported by Peter.

The more specific determination of the time and the historical connection in which the gospel materials took shape depends upon a close study of the documents themselves. This work has gone on so steadily in recent years, and its results are so generally known, that the main points in the discussion, and the present status of opinion, may be summarized very briefly.[3]

[1] *Strom.*, VI, 5.

[2] Probably "Hebrew" is used loosely for Aramaic, the language of daily life among the Palestinian Jews in Jesus' day. The term is so used in Josephus, *War*, VI, ii, 1 (cf. Ant., III, x, 6); and the proper nouns in John 5:2; 19:13, 17, though called "Hebrew," show the Aramaic form in the ending.

[3] The extensive literature on this subject has been well summarized by such representative scholars as Moffatt, *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament* (New York, 1911, pp. 177 ff.); H. Holtzmann, "Die Marcus-Kontroverse in ihrer

A comparative examination of the first three gospels shows that Mark furnished the outline and much of the narrative material for the other two. The older view, that Mark was a later abbreviation made on the basis of Matthew and Luke, is now all but universally abandoned. The Second Gospel is unquestionably one of the sources employed in the writing of the First and Third Gospels. Furthermore, Matthew and Luke are found to agree very closely in several passages where Mark furnishes no parallel. On the other hand, their numerous disagreements with one another make it improbable that Matthew used Luke, and *vice versa*, They sometimes cover the same period with entirely different narratives, as in the accounts of Jesus' infancy; they often set parallel material in very different contexts, a fact illustrated in their handling of the "Sermon on the Mount"; and they usually differ in their alterations of, or additions to, their common source Mark.[1] Evidently they availed them-

heutigen Gestalt" in *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, X (1907), 18–40, 161–200; Loisy, *Les évangiles synoptiques* (Paris, 1907 pp. 59–83). Burkitt's *Gospel History and Its Transmission* (Edinburgh, 1906) is an illuminating survey of the problem itself. Cf. the same author's *The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus* (Boston and New York, 1910).

[1] It is true that sometimes they agree against Mark, but these agreements are relatively so few that they are too frail a

selves of some common source of information in addition to Mark. Unfortunately this is no longer extant, and efforts to reconstruct it from Matthew and Luke have not thus far proved wholly satisfactory.[1] Yet the early existence of a non-Markan document or documents, largely dealing with Jesus' teachings, and used

support, in the opinion of most scholars, for any theory of mutual interdependence between Matthew and Luke. The agreements may be in some cases accidental, they may be due to transcriptional assimilation, or the form of Mark used may have been somewhat different from our canonical version.

[1] The so-called "two-document" hypothesis, which regards Mark and the logia as the principal sources of the Synoptic Gospels, was worked out in its essential features as early as 1838 by Weisse (*Die evangelische Geschichte*) and Wilke (*Der Urevangelist*), but it did not win any general acceptance until the appearance of H. Holtzmann's *Synoptische Evangelien* in 1863. With slightly varying details it was advocated by Weizsäcker in 1864 and B. Weiss in 1872. Since then it has been the dominant theory, especially in Germany. But the non-Markan source is still much discussed. It is now commonly referred to as Q (*Quelle*) rather than *logia*, in order to avoid prejudging its content, about which there is still much uncertainty. Burton (*Principles of Literary Criticism and the Synoptic Problem*, Chicago, 1904) assigns the material to three documents: (1) the *logia* of Papias, (2) an account of the Perean ministry, and (3) a Galilean source; while other minor sources supplied other material peculiar to Matthew or to Luke. Harnack (*Sprüche und Reden Jesu*, Leipzig, 1907) prefers the theory of a single document, brief in compass. B. Weiss (*Die Quellen der synoptischen Ueberlieferung*, Leipzig, 1908), as on former occasions, claims a more comprehensive content for Q. The algebraic X would seem to be a still more appropriate designation for this source material, as then we should not have to commit ourselves to *Quelle* as against *Quellen* — a point on which there is still room for differences of opinion (cf. Luke 1:2 f.).

in common by the writers of Matthew and Luke, is now taken by most scholars to be an established fact.

These results make it evident that we cannot identify our Gospel of Matthew with the Matthean treatise referred to by Papias. Our book does not bear the earmarks of a translation. In its present form it was originally a Greek composition which in many places was copied word for word from the Greek of Mark. This dependence upon Mark also necessitates a new dating for Matthew, as compared with the date 42 A.D., suggested by early tradition. Since Papias seemed to think Mark appeared subsequently to Matthew's collection of sayings, it has commonly been assumed in recent times that Papias assigned to the apostle Matthew some such early source as we find used in Matthew and Luke, in additon to Mark.[1] However this may be, the existence of this document, or of similar collections of early Christian tradition, is an unquestionable conclusion, even if we were dependent upon Matthew and Luke alone for its substantiation.

[1] He may, however, have been thinking about our Matthew but applied to it the tradition about the other work which, even if any longer extant, may not have come under his personal observation.

Thus the genetic units of synoptic tradition are: (1) The Gospel of Mark, mainly concerned with a narrative of Jesus' career, and (2) other tradition which did not necessarily ignore Jesus' deeds but which was especially interested in reporting his teaching. Although many details are still uncertain, it is certainly hyper-skepticism to maintain that we have not a fairly clear idea of this stage in the literary history of the gospels.

How near do these results bring us to the Jesus of history? The fact that Mark is a source for Matthew and Luke, the explicit statement in Acts 1:1 that this work is a sequel to the Third Gospel, and the belief now current that the author of the Fourth Gospel was acquainted with the Synoptics, supplies the relative chronological scheme for thinking of the rise of this literature. Since Mark stands at the beginning, and the non-Markan source of Matthew and Luke seems to be earlier than Mark,[1] the justice of gospel tradition's claim

[1] Wellhausen holds the contrary opinion, but dates Mark about 50 A.D., which still allows a relatively early date for "Q." Harnack would have us believe that "Q," and Mark, and Luke-Acts were all written before Paul's death, but the view is as yet too purely hypothetical to be used in this connection (*Neue Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und zur Abfassungszeit der synoptischen Evangelien*, Leipzig, 1911; so also Koch, *Die Abfas-*

to be heard in testimony for Jesus' existence will depend ultimately upon whether these earliest elements in the tradition may reasonably be assigned to a time and a situation in which personal knowledge of a historical Jesus was possible.

While there are still differences of opinion about the exact dates of the several gospels, critical scholarship of today agrees on placing them within fairly well-defined limits. The last thirty-five years of the first century is the general period in which the composition of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts is commonly placed. Our immediate concern is with Mark. Irenaeus[1] says this gospel was written in Rome after the death of Peter and Paul, but whether this statement rests upon a reliable tradition, or is merely Irenaeus' interpretation of the vaguer testimony of Papias, is uncertain. Similar uncertainty attaches to the tradition that Rome

sungszeit des lukanischen Geschichtswerkes, Leipzig, 1911). Many are of the opinion, however, that Mark may embody some earlier source materials. Cf. J. Weiss, *Das älteste Evangelium* (Göttingen, 1903); Müller, *Geschichtskerne in den Evangelien* (Giessen, 1905); Wendling, *Urmarcus* (Tübingen, 1905) and *Die Entstehugn des Marcus-Evangeliums* (Tübingen, 1908); Bacon, *The Beginnings of Gospel Story* (New Haven, 1909); cf. also Loisy, *op. cit.*, pp. 85 f.

[1] *Haer.*, III, i,1.

was the place of composition. More specific evidence for the dating must be sought in the gospel itself, and this is found in chap. 13. Here Jesus is credited by the author (or by his source) with predicting in emphatic terms the end of the world in Jesus' own generation (13:30 f.; cf. 9:1). Would a tradition of this sort be put into circulation *for the first time* after everybody who had been of Jesus' own generation was dead? A writer would not be likely to invent for Jesus a saying which history in the writer's own day had shown to be false. A later editor or transcriber might preserve such a tradition, either unconscious of its incongruity, or because he felt it could be explained by some device of interpretation, but he would not create it *de novo* unless he wished to disparage the individual of whom he was writing—an inconceivable thing for a Christian biographer of Jesus to do. This prophecy about the end must, therefore, represent either an original saying of Jesus, or a saying first ascribed to him while certain of his own associates were still alive. In either case it presupposes a close connection chronologically between Jesus and the framers of the tradition.

Another noticeable feature of this thirteenth

chapter of Mark is a cautioning against mistaking certain tragic happenings for the actual approach of the ultimate catastrophe, which would bring the present world-order to a close. Preliminary to the final disaster there was to be a season of great tribulation, the like of which the world had never seen before. What historic occasion corresponds to these dire events, when the people of Judea will need to flee to the mountains and when messianic pretenders will endeavor to obtain a following among Christians? Evidently the siege and fall of Jerusalem (66–70 A.D.), described while the fall is yet imminent, or soon after the event. And how closely does the end of all things follow upon these preliminary happenings? The end seemingly is not far off. The gospel is first to be preached to all the nations,[1] yet the end is coming "in those days, after that tribulation," and "this generation shall not pass away until all these things be accomplished." Thus the composition of Mark must fall near the year 70 A.D. Whether the destruction of Jerusalem is a matter of the near future or of the immediate past may be thought

[1] This need imply no lengthy period, for we recall that Paul conceived this task to have been accomplished, so far as the eastern world was concerned, before 60 A.D. (Rom. 15:19–23).

questionable, but in either case the Markan tradition comes from an age when some personal followers of Jesus were still alive. And if this is true for Mark, it will be granted without question for the primitive non-Markan source-material incorporated in Matthew and Luke.

Futhermore, a glance at the content of the early gospel narratives shows a genuine Jewish background and a Palestinian setting for the earliest elements of the tradition.[1] Even in the Greek of our present gospels there are occasionally very clear traces of the original Aramaic speech in which the tradition first circulated. In this connection may be mentioned Paul's *marana tha*, *abba*, and *amen*, and the gospel terms *amen* (verily), *talitha cumi*, *ephphatha*, and *eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani*. Aramaic idioms are also discernible.[2] A conspicuous example is seen in ὁμολογεῖν ἐν ἐμοί,[3] as strange to Greek as the corresponding "confess in me" is to English. A genuinely Jewish type of thought also pervades the atmosphere in which Jesus' activity is set. Mosaic ritual and rabbinic

[1] Cf. Burkitt, *The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus*, pp. 13–29.

[2] Cf. Wellhausen's important contribution to this subject, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien*, pp. 14 ff.

[3] Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8.

practice are crucial problems, the Jews' constant chafing under the yoke of Rome is often evident, and some of the most extended reports of Jesus' teaching pertain to the Jewish messianic hope. These are the main features of the thought which Jesus is pictured as encountering. But outside Palestine these peculiar topics had no vital interest, and we find the author of the Fourth Gospel so far yielding to the demand for a less local portrayal of Jesus' career as to omit almost entirely these items of the primitive tradition. Jülicher seems quite within the proper bounds when, in summing up the results of modern critical study, he says of primitive tradition: "The gospel was virtually completed in the home of Jesus even before his generation passed away, and believing Jews wrote it down at that time in their own language."[1]

For those who will treat evidence of this sort seriously, some substantial conclusions regarding the value of the gospels as sources for a knowledge of Jesus' existence are at once available. The Gospel of Mark, though composed somewhat later than the epistles of Paul,

[1] *Neue Linien in der Kritik der evangelischen Ueberlieferung* (Giessen, 1906, p. 73).

belongs near enough to Jesus' own day to come within the lifetime of some of the original disciples; while the more extended reports of Jesus' teaching now found in Matthew and Luke seem unquestionably to have been derived from common written tradition whose composition very probably antedates that of Mark. That is, the kernel of synoptic tradition took shape in the land of Jesus' birth and among his own countrymen, and dates from the same general period as Paul's letters, when the new religious movement was being propagated under the guidance of leaders who claimed to trace, either directly or indirectly, their authority as well as their inspiration to a period of personal association with an earthly Jesus.

What is to be said of the validity of their claim to know a historical Jesus? It is clear from our previous survey of the circumstances under which the gospel literature arose that its early framers could no more have been deceived than could Paul on the question of the actual existence of Jesus. On this point they are either reliable historians or else they are mythologizers. When the primitive tradition is found to be traceable to the same generation which claims to have known Jesus, the only

course left open to the radicals is to urge that the gospels are tendency writings, theological treatises, aiming to present an interpretation of Jesus and not scrupling to create—perhaps we should say being under the necessity of creating—"Jesus" to give concrete embodiment to doctrine.

It is true that students nowadays recognize the presence of many interpretative features in the gospel narratives, but the proposal to eliminate Jesus' historical reality from this interpretation encounters serious obstacles. In the first place, the most realistic representation of Jesus is found not in the later stages of tradition but in its earliest features. It is Mark who says that Jesus was not able to do any mighty work in Nazareth except to heal a few sick people by laying his hands on them, while in Matthew the statement is simply "he did not do many mighty works there."[1] In Mark too he refuses to be called "good," while in Matthew the conversation concerns "what good thing" the young man shall do in order to have eternal life.[2] Again in the primitive non-Markan tradition Jesus is chiefly a teacher

[1] Mark 6:5; Matt. 13:58.

[2] Mark 10:17 f.; Matt. 19:16 f.; Luke 18:18 f.

rather than a miracle-worker. In the temptation incident he begins his career by deliberately setting aside the idea of miraculous display as a means of self-attestation. Thus this early type of interpretation still reflects the prevailingly normal character of Jesus' actions, although the ardor of later faith in his heavenly lordship made it necessary to explain why so significant an individual had not lived a more striking and outwardly brilliant career on earth. Believers could not fail to feel that Jesus had possessed unique power, hence he must have deliberately refrained from its use.

But as time removed the memory of his earthly life farther into the past, more and more stress was placed upon actual demonstrations of his unique power. Thus in Mark he figures pre-eminently from the beginning of his career as a worker of miracles; yet Mark is still sufficiently under the influence of the earlier tradition to remember that this was not an open sign of Jesus' uniqueness but only a hidden one; that is, the significance of Jesus' conduct had not been understood at the time even by the disciples. Mark also records that Jesus refused to give an open sign when pressed to do so, but on turning to Matthew and Luke

we find this refusal relieved by the modifying phrase, "except the sign of Jonah." This is naturally taken by Matthew to be a reference to Jesus' resurrection, the event which had served as the great initial and transforming sign for the faith of the first believers. In the Fourth Gospel Jesus takes pains to display a long series of signs to attest his uniqueness, the culminating event being the resurrection of Lazarus. In its earliest stages gospel tradition had by no means shaken itself free from the restraining influence of the memory of Jesus as a historical individual, and only in course of time did his normal earthly features become less distinct as they were increasingly overshadowed by the heavenly image upon which his devoted followers loved to gaze.

Especially important, as evidence for the existence of Jesus, is Mark's almost uniform representation that Jesus during his lifetime was generally misunderstood, even by his closest associates. The members of his own family thought him beside himself, and even the Twelve showed a remarkable dulness on nearly every occasion when his uniqueness might, seemingly, easily be perceived. When he was about to feed the four thousand the

disciples were as unsuspecting of the method he was to employ as if they had not, only a short time before, witnessed his miraculous feeding of the five thousand. And after the second incident they were still without understanding, so that Jesus marveled, "Do ye not yet perceive neither understand, have ye your heart hardened?" When he cast out demons the latter spoke of his messiahship in unmistakable terms, and Jesus apparently acknowledged the accusation in the disciples' presence, yet they attained no conviction of his messiahship until near the close of his career. Even then their understanding of it was very crude, and their confidence was quickly shaken by his arrest and death. Similarly they failed to comprehend his meaning when he taught in parables; when the woman was healed by touching his garment they were so stupid as to reprove him for asking who touched him; when he predicted his arrest, death, and resurrection, though he several times repeated the statement, they failed to grasp the idea; on the Mount of Transfiguration even the most favored of his associates were completely mystified; in the Garden of Gethsemane, in view of all that Jesus had said and the situation

that recent events had brought about, they displayed amazing stupidity; and, finally, the women at the tomb departed astonished, silent, and fearful, notwithstanding the angel's explicit announcement of Jesus' resurrection.

In all this Mark is clearly recognizing that Jesus made no such impression upon his contemporaries as his later interpreters thought he ought to have produced, and as they would have him produce on the minds of believers in their day. But by making the blindness of Jesus' associates responsible for this failure, the early theologians could still think of him as displaying unique power commensurate with their faith in him as the heavenly Lord, and at the same time they could harmonize the history with their Christology. This situation represents a time when men were still living who knew that Jesus had been regarded by his personal companions less significantly than subsequent thought of him would presuppose. A writer who was entirely free to follow his fancy will scarcely have left Jesus in this position, or have introduced his readers to a picture that reflected so unfavorably upon the disciples. Had the primitive tradition been purely the product of fancy we should have had

at first that free idealization which is more in evidence a generation or two later when death and time had largely removed the limitations which actual recollection of Jesus imposed upon his first interpreters.

Moreover, there were elements in the early tradition that were not thought especially creditable to Jesus, yet were too generally known to be ignored. These will certainly not have been created for him by his worshipers, and we may believe they will have been overlooked by his biographers, in so far as circumstances permitted. Perhaps no incident of this class gave interpreters more difficulty than Jesus' baptism by John. When the movements inaugurated by these leaders came into competition, as they certainly did in the course of time, the founders' relation to one another inevitably became a subject of controversy. Christian tradition recognized the value of John's work, even affirming his greatness, according to a reported saying of Jesus; yet the tradition was careful to state that he who was least in the kingdom was greater than John. But it was a well-known fact that Jesus had originally been among John's followers—had indeed received baptism at John's hands.

How, then, were Christian interpreters to save the supremacy of their master? Mark sees Jesus' superiority displayed in the baptism of the Holy Spirit received at this time—an experience after the manner of the spiritual outpouring attending the baptism of converts to the new faith. In Matthew it is explicitly stated that Jesus did not need to be baptized by John; he was already greater than John, according to the latter's own acknowledgment. While the act did not primarily benefit Jesus, it did serve two useful purposes: it gave his sanction to baptism as a church ordinance, and it gave the assembled multitude an opportunity to hear the divine testimony to Jesus' messiahship—a result which the scribe effected by changing Mark's "thou art" into "this is" my beloved son. In the Fourth Gospel the benefit of the baptism accrues to John himself, in that he thus learns who the Messiah is to whom he is to turn over his own followers. Here, as usual, Christianity triumphed by absorbing that which at first opposed it; but the very acknowledgment of these and similar difficulties shows that it was dealing with the tradition of a real person, the known facts of whose life did not always harmonize offhand with the interests of primitive Christology.

The necessity of accepting in good faith the gospel representation of Jesus' historicity is practically forced upon us by his proximity to the community in which his life-story first took shape. As we have shown above, the early framers of the tradition bring Jesus upon the scene at a time when those who would have been his contemporaries are still living. Moreover they do this in the very land and among the very people where his activity was staged. Think of the absurdity of this procedure if his individuality were fictitious! Yet there is never an inkling that this claim of reality for him was contested or even doubted by either friend or foe. There were many features in the believer's faith that had to be defended. Jesus' resurrection, his messiahship, his authority in comparison with that of Moses, his superiority to rabbinical teachers, his place in the line of descent from David, and similar tenets of early interpretation were all topics demanding an apologetic. This was never the case with belief in Jesus' historicity. His actual existence was uniformly accepted as a matter of course, which at that time is tantamount to denying the very possibility of doubt about his existence.

Furthermore, the elements of normality

preserved in the story of Jesus' life, while not beyond the possibility of invention, are certainly strikingly verisimilar. He comes, along with his fellow-countrymen, to hear John the Baptist; he identifies himself with the movement inaugurated by this prophet; presently he begins preaching on his own account along lines somewhat different from those of John; his activities are mainly among his fellow-Galileans; country people and fisher-folk are the chief associates of this carpenter-prophet; in time his work comes to the notice of the authorities by whom he is condemned; from this point on his popularity wanes; at the Passover feast-season he is put out of the way; the small group of followers who clung to him until the end now return disheartened to their homes. Such in outline is the realistic basis of the story of Jesus' life. As a case of pure anthropomorphizing this certainly is without parallel, to say the least. It was indeed a skilful artist who could weave this crimson thread of reality into the fanciful God-man's career. Yet here it is, and it remains intact while other parts of the fabric fade and crumble under the light of critical research. We may at all events believe the possibility of its

genuineness to be commensurate with its naturalness and durability.

The character of the teaching ascribed to Jesus may be cited as further evidence of his existence. Not that fictitious teaching may not easily have been invented, but a fitting source for the thinking ascribed to him is nowhere found more appropriately than in an individual who occupied the place and confronted the problems assigned by tradition to him. The so-called newness of his teaching has often been pronounced a delusion. We have been told that all he is alleged to have said can be explained as a loan from Judaism, plus a contribution by the early theologians. Certainly we are not to expect that his thought would be entirely different from that of Judaism, and the early believers may indeed have made some contributions to the content of primitive Christian teaching. Still we find in the tradition some distinctive items which seem to be pre-eminently the product of Jesus' own thinking. The New Testament writings exhibit rather clearly the chief interests of primitive Christian dogma, and these are found to be mainly christological in type. We also know something of the thought-world prior to and

contemporary with Jesus. Divine judgment was the central theme of the preaching of John the Baptist. Palestinian Judaism of the time probably was not absolutely uniform in its thinking, but one of its prevailing characteristics was the idea of God's separateness from the world. Man sought to win divine favor through legal observance, or through asceticism.

Now Jesus' teaching does not put stress upon Christology—in fact the primitive phases of his teaching are remarkably lacking in this feature. His thought does not revolve about John's God of wrath who is coming in judgment. Nor do the legalism of the Pharisees, the politics either of the Sadducees or of the Zealots, the asceticism of the Essenes, we may even add the eschatology of the apocalyptists, constitute the chief item in Jesus' teaching as reported in our most primitive sources. His great theme is God's nearness and love, heart righteousness, and man's divine sonship to be realized through a godlike life. To be sure this is not emphatically un-Jewish, nor is it un-Christian. But it was not the center of interest for the aggressive thinkers of the early church—witness Paul and the author of the Fourth Gospel; nor can it be called a natural product of the currents of

Jewish thought prevailing at the beginning of our era. Yet it is a most distinctive item in primitive gospel tradition. Whence came it? Not from some fortuitous concourse of abstract ideas crystallizing of themselves above the heads of men and falling upon them as snow from the clouds. Great thoughts do not come to humanity that way. They are rather the product of some great soul, reacting upon the actual problems of his world. The source of this alleged teaching of Jesus must be an individual. The necessary character of this individual, requirements as to the time and place of his appearance, these and other demands are met best by the historical Jesus of Christian tradition.

Finally, one of the strongest arguments for Jesus' existence is the existence of the primitive community of believers. The new faith at the very beginning emphasizes its loyalty to a personal founder who soon after his death is accorded divine honors amounting practically to worship. We have been told that this reverence on the part of the disciples necessarily excludes the possibility of Jesus' historicity; it is inconceivable that men should worship one who had been actually known to them in his

human limitations. Whether this principle was strictly binding in the ancient world may be questioned; nevertheless if Christians had rendered worship to the man Jesus as such, the above objection might be plausible. It was, however, the exalted Messiah to whom godlike homage was paid. The transition of thought from the earthly Jesus to the heavenly Christ was not a gradual process requiring centuries of growth; it was effected almost in the twinkling of an eye by the *tour de force* of the resurrection experiences. Believers were now confident that God had done something for Jesus which had not been done for any other man—Jesus had been miraculously raised from the dead—and those who believed this honored Jesus accordingly. Doubtless a high estimate of him while on earth has to be presupposed as the antecedent of the latter attitude, but the notion of deification, so far as the early believers were concerned, rested upon faith in his resurrection. And this faith, in turn, needed an earthly Jesus quite as much as a heavenly Christ.

Christians were doubtless conscious of some incongruity between their former attitude toward Jesus and their reverence for him after

his resurrection. They tried to remove this discrepancy by enlarging upon their memory of his earthly career, while they explained their failure to perceive his uniqueness during his lifetime as due to dulness on their part. Their hearts were hardened and their eyes were holden. But under these circumstances must we not suppose that the earthly Jesus was troublesome to the community because of the difficulty of fitting him into their christological speculations? And if so, can we consistently make the community's existence rest fundamentally upon the existence of this Jesus? On the other hand it is quite wrong to imagine that early Christians ever wanted to rid themselves of the fact of Jesus' earthly career—not even by the Docetists was that attempted. It was only the too vivid outlines of Jesus' human limitations that his zealous interpreters sought to remove, but to eliminate his historical existence would have meant shipwreck for their faith. In fact the idea of an exalted Christ alone would hardly have sufficed even for their christological speculations, since it would have invalidated their resurrection faith. Much less could it have supplied an adequate background for the uniqueness and vitality of

the new religion. This was from the first linked up with the memory of a historical founder. This fact we have already discovered in Paul's relations with the first Christians; it appears again in the early chapters of Acts, and it is further attested by the central place given to Jesus' words and deeds in the earliest phases of gospel tradition. The impetus for the new movement comes from this individual, he supplies the incentive for the new type of thinking, he is the object about which the new literature gathers, and he is the model and inspiration of the new community's life.

This forceful individual, who impressed his own and succeeding generations with his life of loyal service for humanity and his plain yet profoundly significant religious teaching, started Christianity on its way. To find this ideal without a historical Jesus, as to create Paul without Paul, is practically impossible. The Christ-idea alone is not equal to the task of producing Christianity, it is not sufficiently real, human, vital. The new movement was certainly influenced by ideas of various sorts with which it came into contact from time to time. It even adopted current notions and ritualistic practices in the effort to give tangible

expression to its inner life, but the starting-point of theology and ritual, as well as of literary activity and religious impulse, was the memory of an earthly Jesus.[1] He was the great source of inspiration for Christian living. Just as Paul is found harking back to the type of life exemplified in Jesus, so must many Christians have seen in him the personal embodiment of their ideal. Thus each became, according to individual ability, a coefficient of the Jesus-life. While the new religion, "Christianity," took its name from the heavenly Christ of faith, the actual existence of an earthly Jesus was its corner-stone. Other foundation hath no man laid—successfully.

[1] Speaking of early Christianity, Clemen says: "Es ist eine gestiftete Religion, und da als dieser Stifter des Christentums immer nur Jesus bezeichnet wird, können wir jetzt sagen: er war eine geschichtliche Persönlichkeit. . . . . Wir kennen das Milieu, aus dem es hervorgegangen ist—und dieses Bild wird sich auch durch etwaige künftige Entdeckungen nicht mehr völlig ändern—aber aus diesem Milieu konnte es nur hervorgehen, wenn eine richtunggebende Persönlichkeit an seinem Anfang steht. Das ist der durchschlagende und unwiderlegliche Beweis für die Geschichtlichkeit Jesu."—*Der geschichtliche Jesus*, p, 43.

CHAPTER VIII

EXTRA-BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR JESUS' EXISTENCE

Even in the New Testament not all writings are equally important witnesses for the historical personality of Jesus. Yet all proceed upon the assumption that the primitive testimony to his existence is unquestionably reliable. While none of the New Testament books supplies any more original evidences than are found in Paul's epistles and the gospels, they all have a corroborative value, and testify to the pervasiveness of belief in Jesus' historicity. Of the same type is the evidence derived from the non-canonical gospel fragments.[1] Regardless of the judgment we may pass upon the historicity of the details the apocryphal gospels narrate, they show that the notion of an earthly Jesus was uniformly accepted as a basal fact with which all varieties of interpretation had to reckon.

[1] These confirm such realistic items in Jesus' career as his baptism by John, his association with disciples, his habit of teaching, and his violent death. Cf. Preuschen, *Antilegomena* (Giessen, 1905[2]); W. Bauer, *Das Leben Jesu im Zeitalter der neutestamentlichen Apokryphen* (Tübingen, 1909).

The same thing is true of the Apostolic Fathers, though they never offer anything like a sketch of Jesus' life. They take the reality of his earthly existence for granted, in this respect following the current Christian tradition both in its historical and in its interpretative characteristics. Though belief in Jesus' pre-existence and heavenly exaltation are stress points for interpretation, the fact of his appearance upon earth remains fundamental for the Christian gospel. Thus Clement of Rome, near the end of the first century, writes:

> The apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was sent forth from God. So then Christ is from God and the apostles are from Christ. Both therefore come of the will of God in the appointed order. Having therefore received a charge, and having been fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and confirmed in the word of God with the full assurance of the Holy Ghost, they went forth with the glad tidings that the kingdom of God should come.[1]

By the close of the first century and continuing on into the second, when the Apostolic Fathers and the writers of the apocryphal gospels were doing their work, the tradition of an actual earthly career of Jesus was uniformly

[1] *Ad Cor.*, 42:1-3.

accepted. This is, of course, what one would expect in Christian circles as the natural outcome of the teaching of Paul and other early missionaries. While this testimony can therefore have only secondary value, it does show that belief in Jesus' historicity was never the *pièce de résistance* of controversy. Even the heretics whom Ignatius condemns were not questioning the fact of Jesus' actual appearance upon earth, but only the reality of his human nature. Against these Ignatius exhorts his readers to adhere to the primitive faith, being "fully persuaded concerning the birth and the passion and the resurrection, which took place in the time of the governorship of Pontius Pilate."[1] This is the uniform Christian tradition, beginning with the earliest times, when personal companions of Jesus were still living, and extending on through the first and second centuries until finally incorporated into the official creed of the church.

When we follow the history of Christianity, as described in its own documents, down to about the middle of the second century for example, it would seem to have been the world-stirring movement of the age. The Roman official is

[1] *Mag.*, 11.

called upon to execute Jesus; Paul is frequently brought before the civil authorities in defense of the new religion until finally he lands in prison in the capital; Christians attract attention and are persecuted in different parts of the empire before the close of the first century; Clement of Rome mentions similar experiences undergone by the Roman church in earlier and in more recent times; when Ignatius writes his epistles he is *en route* to Rome whither he is being transported as a prisoner under condemnation on account of his religion, and about the middle of the second century Justin addresses an apology to the Emperor "in behalf of those from every race of men who are hated and abused."[1] It would seem that Christianity had early come to the notice of the imperial authorities, who had strenuously but vainly endeavored to stay the progress of the new religion which was destined to spread itself rapidly over the Roman world.

This is the way the situation looked to Christians. But from the contemporary Roman point of view the outlook was apparently quite different. The secular writers who record the history of the period either ignore the new

[1] Apol., I, 1.

religious movement, or mention it only casually; and as for its founder, whose personality was so unique according to Christian tradition, he is hardly so much as known by name. But one may easily overestimate the significance of this silence. In the first place it must be remembered that our available sources of information from the Roman side are scanty. Moreover the secular historian as a rule had no interest in the various religions throughout the empire so long as their devotees did not take an openly hostile attitude toward the state. For some time the Jews had been looked upon with suspicion for their refusal to identify themselves with heathen society, and as Christians took practically the Jewish position in this matter, they introduced no novelty into the situation so far as the casual Roman observer was concerned. It was perfectly natural for a heathen writer to fail to differentiate Christianity from Judaism, and so to pass it by without more specific designation. Its founder would seem no more deserving of attention than any other Jewish rabbi or prophet.

While Roman sources are very scanty, they do furnish a few items of importance. Pliny, when governor of Bithynia, wrote to Trajan

concerning the proper method of dealing with Christianity. The date of the letter is commonly set at 112 A.D. The Christian "superstition" is said to have spread like a contagion not only through the cities but also into the villages and country regions. The temples were almost forsaken and the trade in sacrifices had fallen off deplorably. But the movement was not a new one in Pliny's time. One person confessed that he had abandoned it twenty years before. Although Pliny was somewhat disturbed by the situation, he felt that the first enthusiasm was safely passed and the tide of return to the national religion had set in. He found some who had formerly been drawn away by the superstition now ready to offer incense to Caesar's image and to curse Christ. Other accused persons denied that they had ever been Christians. Yet the wide extent of the movement is shown even in Pliny's optimistic outlook.[1] Making due allowance for possible exaggeration, it is still certain that

[1] To cite only the closing sentences of the letter: "certe satis constat prope iam desolata templa coepisse celebrari et sacra sollemnia diu intermissa repeti pastumque venire victimarum, cuius adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur. ex quo facile est opinari, quae turba hominum emendari possit, si sit paenitentiae locus."

Christianity had gained a strong foothold in the regions governed by Pliny, where it had been in evidence for several years.[1]

Of the founder of the movement Pliny tells us nothing. He knows that Christians reverence one called Christ to whom they sing hymns in their assembly and whom they refuse to curse, but nothing more is said of this individual. The subject would have no probable interest for a Roman official. Even for a historian like Suetonius, Christian origins appear to have been of little moment, and his references to Christianity itself are very obscure. About 120 A.D., in his lives of the Caesars from Julius Caesar to Domitian, he twice makes statements which have been taken to refer to Christianity. He says Claudius expelled Jews from Rome because they raised a constant commotion at the instigation of a certain *Chrestus*.[2] Again in writing of Nero he remarks that this emperor punished the *Christiani*, who were adherents of a "new and odious superstition."[3] The latter statement is easily understood, for we are

[1] The genuineness of the reported correspondence between Pliny and Trajan has not always passed unquestioned, but critical opinion at present is in favor of holding to its authenticity. Cf. Goguel, *L'Eucharistie* (Paris, 1910, pp. 259 ff.).

[2] *Claud.*, XXV. [3] *Nero*, XVI.

familiar with the idea that Nero persecuted the Christians. But the reference to *Chrestus* who incited a disturbance among the Jews is not so clear. The confusion of *Chrestus* and *Christus* by the heathen we know to have been a fact,[1] but certainly Jesus (*Christus*) of the gospel narratives could not have been in Rome in the time of Claudius (41–54 A.D.). We also know from various sources that the Roman emperors did on occasion expel Jews from Rome,[2] but the question here is whether *Chrestus* is an inaccurate reference to Christianity and its founder. The natural meaning of *impulsore Chresto* is that a disturbance was caused by a Jew named *Chrestus* living in Rome at the time. Perhaps it is precarious to force any other meaning from Suetonius' language, and it may be that we have here to do with the work of some messianic enthusiast of the Zealot type. On the other hand, it is also

[1] Cf. Tertullian, *Apol.*, III; Lactantius, *Instit.*, IV, 7; Justin, *Apol.*, I, 55.

[2] About 19 A.D. Tiberius ordered an expulsion, according to Josephus, *Ant.*, XVIII, iii, 5; Tacitus, *Annal.*, II, 85; Suetonius, *Tiber.*, XXXVI. The statements about Claudius' action are conflicting. According to Acts 18:2; Suetonius, *Claud.*, XXV; Orosius, VII, 6, 15, an edict of expulsion went into effect. Dio Cassius says Claudius merely prohibited the Jews' assembling together.

possible that Suetonius did not distinguish sharply between Jews and Christians, and knew so little of the actual situation as to make his reference to it thus unintelligible. If the disturbance was really due to a controversy between Jews and Christians, this is evidence of the spread of Christianity to the capital of the empire by the year 50 A.D. Paul's letter to the Romans less than ten years later also presupposes an early date for the planting of the new faith in Rome.

Tacitus' information is much more explicit.[1] According to his definite statement, the Christians whom Nero persecuted were named from "Christ" who had been put to death by Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. Here we at last find a Roman historian (writing before 115 A.D.) bearing unequivocal testimony to the existence of the Jesus of gospel history. Is this passage a genuine part of the original author's

[1] His most important sentences are: "ergo abolendo rumori [that Nero had himself burned Rome] Nero subdidit reos et quaesitissimis poenis affecit quos per flagitia invisos vulgus Christianos appellabat. auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat, repressaque in praesens exitiabilis superstitio rursum erumpebat non modo per Judaeam, originem eius mali, sed per urbem etiam, quo cuncta undique atrocia aut pudenda confluunt celebranturque." *Annal.*, XV, 44.

work? And, if so, is it a source independent of gospel tradition? The preponderance of critical opinion answers the former question affirmatively; the answer to the latter is less certain. Those who deny Jesus' historicity make much of Hochart's protest against the genuineness of Tacitus.[1] The French scholar extended his doubts not only to cover the whole chapter in question but also much more of the alleged writings of the Roman historian. He would make Poggio Bracciolini, who brought our most important manuscript of Books xi–xvi of the *Annals* to light in 1427, in reality the author of the work. This extreme skepticism has failed to win any substantial approval,[2] nor are we able to accept the arguments sometimes urged against the sentence which refers particularly to Jesus' death under Pilate. Apart from a-priori considerations, the main objec-

[1] Hochart, *Études au sujet de la persécution des Chrétiens sous Néron* (Paris, 1885), *De l'authenticité des Annales et des Histoires de Tacite* (Paris, 1890), *Nouvelles considérations au sujet des Annales et des Histoires de Tacite* (Paris, 1894). Cf. also Ross, *Tacitus and Bracciolini: The Annals Forged in the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1878). Ross questions the *Annals* only, but Hochart rejects also the *History*.

[2] Cf. the refutation by C. F. Arnold, *Studien über die neronische Christenverfolgen* (Leipzig, 1888); Furneaux, *The Annals of Tacitus* (Oxford, 1896², I, 8–12).

tions lie in the two phrases, *Tiberio imperitante* and *per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum.* The former is said to be un-Tacitean; Tacitus would have written *princeps* in speaking of Tiberius. But much as one might think he should have used the latter term, it cannot be denied that he might not have used the former, which occurs several times in the writings usually credited to Tacitus. The further contention, that "the procurator Pontius Pilate" needs closer definition, is more in point. Over what country was he governor? But the answer is near at hand, for we are informed at once that Judea is the source whence this "malady" sprang.

Accepting the genuineness of Tacitus, it is still a question whether his testimony is based on anything other than current Christian tradition. He may have had access to official records in which the facts he records were mentioned, yet in the present state of our information this is purely a matter of conjecture. On the other hand, we have already seen that gospel tradition by the year 115 A.D. had taken the form in which it is at present known, and had been carried broadcast over the Roman Empire by word of mouth if not in written

documents. And the death of Jesus under Pontius Pilate was one of its most persistent items. Tacitus' reliability does not suffer by admitting that he may have had his information from current Christian tradition; this possibility merely robs us of the convenience of citing Tacitus as an independent witness.

More satisfactory results might be expected from an examination of Jewish writings of the period. Of these however only the works of Philo and Josephus have been preserved at all fully. The latter frequently speaks about a certain contemporary named Justus[1] who also wrote a history of the Jewish war, a work which Josephus criticizes very unfavorably. In the latter part of the ninth century Photius,[2] patriarch of Constantinople, refers to Justus' "chronicle of the Jewish kings" from Moses to Agrippa II. This is pronounced by Photius to be very brief and to pass over many important and necessary things, among them the appearing of Christ, the fulfilment of prophecy in him, and the miracles he wrought. Hence if Justus' work was still extant there is slight probability that it would yield anything for

[1] Josephus, *Life*, 9, 12, 17, 35, 37, 54, 65, 70, and 74.

[2] *Cod.*, 33 (Migne ed., CIII, col. 65).

use in this connection. Philo also has nothing to offer, since, as already noted, his treatise on the Therapeutes has no reference to Christianity.

Josephus only remains. Twice in his *Antiquities* he mentions Jesus. In the midst of an account of calamities suffered by the Jews in the time of Pilate, we read:

> At this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it is proper to call him a man. For he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of men who receive the truth gladly, and he won to himself both many Jews and many Greeks. This was the Christ. And when Pilate, on the indictment of the chief men among us, sentenced him to crucifixion, those who loved him at first did not cease loving him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day as indeed the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonders concerning him. And even to this day the race of Christians named from him is not extinct.[1]

On another occasion, in speaking of the high priest Ananus, Josephus says: "So he [Ananus]

[1] The original of this very important passage is, according to the Niese text: *Γίνεται δὲ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον Ἰησοῦς σοφὸς ἀνήρ, εἴγε ἄνδρα αὐτὸν λέγειν χρή· ἦν γὰρ παραδόξων ἔργων ποιητής, διδάσκαλος ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἡδονῇ τἀληθῆ δεχομένων. καὶ πολλοὺς μὲν Ἰουδαίους, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ ἐπηγάγετο· ὁ χριστὸς οὗτος ἦν. καὶ αὐτὸν ἐνδείξει τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν παρ' ἡμῖν σταυρῷ ἐπιτετιμηκότος Πιλάτου οὐκ ἐπαύσαντο οἱ τὸ πρῶτον ἀγαπήσαντες· ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῶν τῶν θείων προφητῶν ταῦτά τε καὶ ἄλλα μυρία περὶ αὐτοῦ θαυμάσια εἰρηκότων. εἰς ἔτι τε νῦν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀπὸ τοῦδε ὠνομασμένον οὐκ ἐπέλιπε τὸ φῦλον* (*Ant.*, XVIII, iii, 3).

assembled the sanhedrin of judges and brought before them the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, whose name was James, and some others. And when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law he delivered them to be stoned."[1]

Each of these passages contains a perfectly clear reference to the Jesus of gospel history, but the genuineness, particularly of the former, is commonly doubted. The grounds of this doubt are, first, the difficulty of ascribing statements of this sort to a Jew. One would expect a Jewish writer either to refute or to ignore the claims made by Christians for Jesus' uniqueness. It is especially difficult to imagine that Josephus would emphatically assert the messiahship of Jesus. Josephus has little to say about the messianic hope, that item in Jewish faith which had been the source of so much trouble for the Roman authorities. For his part he would set the Roman mind at rest by identifying Vespasian with the promised Messiah. He makes this statement in his *War*

[1] This reads: *ἅτε δὴ οὖν τοιοῦτος ὢν ὁ Ἄνανος, νομίσας ἔχειν καιρὸν ἐπιτήδειον διὰ τὸ τεθνάναι μὲν Φῆστον, Ἀλβῖνον δ' ἔτι κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν ὑπάρχειν, καθίζει συνέδριον κριτῶν καὶ παραγαγὼν εἰς αὐτὸ τὸν ἀδελφὸν Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ, Ἰάκωβος ὄνομα αὐτῷ, καί τινας ἑτέρους, ὡς παρανομησάντων κατηγορίαν ποιησάμενος παρέδωκε λευσθησομένους* (*Ant.*, XX, ix, 1).

(VI, v, 4) and it is hardly conceivable that he would later in the *Antiquities* come out with so bold an assertion of Jesus' messiahship. It would seem that we have here either an out and out fabrication, or a radical recasting of some statement whose original import was less favorable to Christianity.

Each of these opinions has been advocated.[1] The former is more commonly adopted nowadays, yet the latter still has adherents. Goethals[2] would rewrite and so interpret the language as to make Josephus take a somewhat liberal yet distinctly Jewish point of view. In particular, the sentence "this was the Christ" is thought originally to have read "the Christ as many supposed" [ὁ χριστὸς ὡς πολλοῖς ἐνομίζετο]. J. Weiss also holds it quite unnecessary to reject the passage outright.[3] He would understand "this was the Christ" to mean this Jesus was the one whom the Christians today, as everyone knows, honor as the Christ; and similarly the reference to the

[1] On this much-discussed question see Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes* (3d and 4th ed.), I, 544 ff., where citations of literature to 1901 are given.

[2] *Josèphe témoin de Jésus* (Mélanges d'histoire du Christianisme, I, Bruxelles et Paris, 1909); cf. Soltau, *Wochenschrift für klassische Philologie*, 1910, N. 24.

[3] *Jesus von Nazareth*, pp. 88 f.

fulfilment of prophecy would be an objective representation of Christian opinion. But none of these solutions quite disposes of one serious difficulty, namely the foreignness of the passages to its context. Its motive is neither to record a sample of Jewish "sedition," nor is it a "calamity which put the Jews into disorder"—the topics treated in the context. It is rather a distinctly biased note aiming to glorify Christianity, a note such as a Christian might write on the margin or a scribe insert into the text. This is all the more probable since it is not so much to Jews—who looked upon Josephus with suspicion after his part in the war with Rome—as to Christians that we are indebted for the preservation of Josephus' works. In fact the earliest Christian references to Josephus are against the originality of the paragraph in question. Twice Origen affirms that Josephus did not acknowledge the messiahship of Jesus,[1] and in each instance the phrase "Jesus, the so-called Christ" (from *Antiquities*, XX, ix, 1) is the ground of Origen's statement. Evidently he is not acquainted with the earlier paragraph, since so outspoken a testimony to Jesus' messiahship from the Jew, Josephus,

[1] *Com. on Matt.*, X, 17 (Migne ed., XIII, col. 877), and *contra Celsum*, I, 47.

would have been a deadly weapon to employ against the Jew, Celsus. This weapon was, however, forged not long after Origen's day, for Eusebius cites the paragraph on two occasions and evidently thinks it genuine.[1]

There is less reason to doubt that Josephus himself mentioned James, "the brother of the so-called Christ." This is attested by Origen on three occasions.[2] Yet Schürer thinks the authenticity of this passage in Josephus is also very doubtful. He infers this from Origen's statement that Josephus thought the fall of Jerusalem to be an expression of the divine displeasure on account of the killing of James.[3] Since none of our manuscripts of Josephus support this reading Schürer concludes that the text used by Origen had already undergone Christian revision, and it is therefore doubtful whether even the reference to Jesus in this connection should be retained. But can we dispose of Origen's testimony so easily? This reading

[1] *Hist. Eccl.*, I, 11, and *Dem. Evang.*, III, 5.

[2] In addition to the two references given above, see *contra Celsum*, II, 13.

[3] As cited in Origen, *Com. on Matt.*, X, 17, Josephus said: "The people thought they suffered these things for the sake of James." In *contra Celsum*, I, 47 and II, 13 this opinion is credited to Josephus himself.

was not peculiar to Origen;[1] it is also attested by Jerome.[2] Moreover it is not easy to discover a motive which would prompt the Christians to connect the fall of Jerusalem with the death of James, when they seem to have been uniformly of the opinion that it was a punishment upon the Jews for their rejection of Jesus. It would have served Christian interests better to remove this statement from Josephus.[3] Nor is it intrinsically improbable that many Jews entertained a good opinion of James, in spite of his adherence to Christianity. Even in the New Testament he is reputed for his loyalty to the law. We also know the Jews were much displeased with the Sadducean high priest, Ananus, and petitioned Albinus to restrain him in his rash conduct.[4] Evidently

[1] Schürer says of it, "ohne Zweifel eine singuläre, in den Vulgärtext des Josephus nicht übergegangene christliche Interpolation."

[2] *de vir. illus.*, 13.

[3] Note Origen's query: *εἴπερ οὖν διὰ Ἰάκωβον λέγει συμβεβηκέναι τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἐρήμωσιν τῆς Ἱερουσαλήμ, πῶς οὐχὶ εὐλογώτερον διὰ Ἰησοῦν τὸν Χριστὸν τοῦτο φάσκειν γεγονέναι;* (*contra Celsum*, I, 47; cf. II, 13).

[4] It is true that Hegesippus, according to Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, II, 23, blames the "Jews and Scribes and Pharisees" for James' death, but Hegesippus is much less likely to have been well informed on this subject than is Josephus.

the charge of lawbreaking which Ananus brought against James was not an expression of popular Jewish opinion. To many Jews Ananus himself was the real lawbreaker.[1] A favorable reference to James, like the similar reference to John the Baptist,[2] may well have been original with Josephus. And it was not unnatural to identify "Jacobus" more closely by indicating his relationship to Jesus, who in turn is distinguished from various other persons of the same name by reminding Roman readers that they commonly called this individual "Christ."[3] It seems quite possible that Josephus did mention in this incidental way "Jesus, the so-called Christ."

A new interest in Josephus as a witness for Christianity has recently been awakened by Berendts' work on the Slavonic version of the Jewish War.[4] According to this translation Josephus had said many things, not contained in the ordinary text, about John the Baptist

[1] Cf. Josephus, *Ant.*, XX, ix, 1.

[2] *Ant.*, XVIII, v, 2.

[3] Cf. Pliny, Suetonius, Tacitus.

[4] *Die Zeugnisse vom Christentum im slavischen "de bello judaico" des Josephus* (Texte und Untersuchungen, XXIX, 4, Leipzig, 1906); "Analecta zum slavischen Josephus" in the *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, IX (1908), 47–70.

and Jesus. These Slavonic additions have usually been treated as unauthentic interpolations, but Berendts asserts that they are from the hand of Josephus himself. His view in brief is this. Starting with Josephus' own statement that he had first written his account of the war in his native tongue and dedicated it to the "upper barbarians," Berendts infers that the Greek rendering which Josephus later made, and which has become the standard text, was really a revision of the earlier work. This first draft, prepared for the "upper barbarians," had also been translated into Greek, and became the particular source of the present Slavonic rendering. In this Josephus had spoken of Jesus several times, but in preparing a version for Roman readers he exscinded these passages.

If Berendts' theory were established, Josephus would be a very substantial witness for the historicity of Jesus. In the Slavonic version the story of Jesus' life is told in outline, his superhuman nature is clearly acknowledged, his marvelous deeds and wonderful teaching are mentioned, and such items as the betrayal, crucifixion, watch at the tomb, and resurrection are attested. One naturally asks whether all

this may not be the work of a Christian hand, and whether the data are not derived from the gospels. Berendts answers both questions negatively. He finds the Slavonic material to be different from the Christian interpolation in the accepted text of *Antiquities*, XVIII, iii, 3. The former does not speak of Jesus' messiahship, nor refer to his fulfilment of prophecy. Arguments from interruption of the context, foreign style, and Origen's assertion that Josephus did not acknowledge Jesus' messiahship, urged against the passage in the *Antiquities*, are thought to have no force here. Furthermore, we are reminded that Josephus did not belong to that side of Judaism which would be most hostile to Christianity, so his appreciation of Jesus as a wonder-worker cannot, on merely a-priori grounds, be denied. The argument for dependence upon the gospels is met by noting that the contents and point of view in the Slavonic material do not correspond closely with the gospel narratives, but are at times so different that they can hardly be accounted for on the basis of these sources alone. Nor do any apocryphal writings seem to furnish these data. Further, Berendts contends that no Christian who had the gospels

would be interested in creating the accounts which appear in the Slavonic version. They must come from a Jew, and even he could hardly have written as he did later than the first century A.D. That is, the author most probably was Josephus himself, so Berendts concludes.

These arguments are scarcely forceful enough to justify us in accepting the data of the Slavonic work as Josephus' own testimony to Jesus. In the first place, the language is too appreciative of Jesus' uniqueness and superhuman character to have come from anyone who was not a Christian. While Jesus is said to have been human in nature and form, his appearing was more than human and his works were divine, so that he could neither be called a man nor an angel. He is the unique wonder-worker sent forth from God. This surely is Christian language, and not altogether unlike some ideas in the Fourth Gospel. Failure to call Jesus the Messiah seems to be due merely to the feeling that he is too unique to be measured adequately by the messianic concept. Again, wide variations from the gospel narratives, even contradictions of these narratives, cannot establish priority for the variant version.

The apocryphal gospels show clearly that Christian writers familiar with gospel tradition could depart from it widely. We cannot believe that we are here dealing with direct testimony from Josephus.[1]

Thus Josephus proves to be of only slight value as a source of information about Jesus. He appears to have known of Jesus' existence, yet he mentions him only casually and on but one occasion. This comparative inattention to Christianity and its founder has occasioned frequent comment. Josephus records the activity of certain other individuals who figure only incidentally in Jewish history, for example, Judas of Galilee,[2] John the Baptist,[3] Theudas,[4] the Egyptian,[5] and Jesus who prophesied the ruin of Jerusalem.[6] Why should he not speak

[1] For a more extended criticism of Berendts' position, see Schürer in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, XXXI (1906), 262 ff. He thinks the Slavonic work is originally a Christian interpolation made by a patripassionist who used the gospels as his only sources of information. Other critics would save a part of the material for Josephus, or at least would take it to represent primitive Jewish tradition. E.g., Goethals, *op. cit.*, and *Jean précurseur de Jésus* (Bruxelles et Paris, 1911); Frey, *Der slavische Josephusbericht über die urchristliche Geschichte nebst seinen Parallelen kritisch untersucht* (Leipzig, 1908).

[2] *Ant.*, XVIII, i, 1 ff.; *War*, II, viii, 1.

[3] *Ibid.*, XVIII, v, 2.

[4] *Ibid.*, XX, v, 1.

[5] *Ibid.*, XX, viii, 6; *War*, II, xiii, 5.

[6] *War*, VI, v, 3.

more at length of the gospel Jesus whose followers, like those of Judas, believed their master was the Messiah; whose preaching to some extent resembled John's; whose reputed prophecy of Jerusalem's fall was not wholly unlike that of the other Jesus?

Possibly Josephus deliberately excluded this subject. Messianists from time to time had caused the Roman authorities trouble, consequently Josephus may, as seems likely in his treatment of Daniel, have purposely slurred over the messianic hopes of the Jews. He can speak of messianic agitators, like Judas, Theudas, and the Egyptian, who have failed in their claims, and he can dismiss the Jewish messianic prophecies by implying their fulfilment in Vespasian, but how will he dispose of this new messianic movement, Christianity, which the Romans of his own day regard with disfavor and associate closely with the Jews? He might protest against linking this "superstition," as the Romans called it, with Judaism; yet he could not deny that its sources were Jewish, as were also its traits and many of its adherents. Silence was the more practical policy. To recall that Christianity, at the time an unpopular movement in the eyes of the Roman authori-

ties, was of Jewish origin, would not have added to the respect for his ancestors and their religion which Josephus sought to inspire in his readers. This is the explanation commonly given for Josephus' reserve in speaking of Jesus and Christians.[1]

But may not indifference on Josephus' part have been the main reason for his "silence"? To this politician, historian, and Jewish apologist, Christianity is not likely to have seemed particularly significant. Jesus' career had been of relatively slight importance for general Jewish history. His contact with the politics of his day was not so close as that of Judas or Theudas, or even of John the Baptist. Jesus had not figured as a messianic claimant, at least not in any sense which would appeal to Josephus as real. While Jesus seems to have been condemned on the formal charge of claim-

[1] E.g., Jülicher says: "Von ihnen zu schweigen war klügere Taktik, als sie mühsam von den Rockschössen abzuschütteln."—*Hat Jesus gelebt?* p. 19. Similarly Weinel: "Der Grund liegt aber nicht im Christentum oder in der Nichtexistenz Jesu, sondern bei Josephus, der übrigens auch von Johannes dem Täufer und von der ganzen messianischen Bewegung in seinem Volk in einer Weise erzählt, die den Römern die Juden als möglichst harmlose und ruhige, philosophische Staatsbürger darstellen soll."—*Ist das "liberale" Jesusbild widerlegt?* p. 107. J. Weiss, on the other hand, finds in Josephus' comparative silence a mark of his friendliness toward the Christians (*Jesus von Nazareth*, p. 91).

ing to be Messiah, we may be sure it was not this feature in his career which had primarily aroused enmity. The Jews were not treating their messianic aspirants that way. Jesus refused to be a messianic agitator and thus he became, from a standpoint such as Josephus is likely to have taken, a negligible factor in Jewish history. Even for Christians themselves Jesus was primarily the *coming* Messiah; and the notion of his messianic dignity upon earth was not at first, and perhaps did not for some time become, a fixed idea with definite content. Hence for Josephus he is the one "called Christ"—not a messianic claimant of the past whose career has any important relation to the religion, politics, and life of the Jews. And as for the Christian movement in Josephus' own day, that too may have seemed of little account. So far as it had come to public notice it was doubtless confined mainly to the lower classes of society with whom a contemporary historian would have little concern. This would be particularly true of a Roman, and we must remember that Josephus had schooled himself to take the Roman point of view.

This indifference of Josephus is not so surprising when we remember that he does not

represent the phase of Judaism with which primitive Christianity came into closest contact. If we had access to the life and thinking of contemporary rabbinical Judaism possibly we should find more frequent reference to Jesus. Unfortunately there are no contemporary documents to supply this information; but there are three main sources of late date where one might conceivably find earlier materials embedded. These are (1) Christian references to Jewish opponents, (2) Talmudic statements about Jesus, and (3) the so-called *Tol^e^doth Jeshu* stories.

The New Testament shows Christianity and Judaism in conflict with one another even as early as Paul's day, a situation which seems to have perpetuated itself, at least so far as conditions on gentile soil were concerned, all through the New Testament period. We know that the opposition between the two was also bitter at an early date in Palestine, and it may have continued so, even though literary evidence for the later situation is now wanting. The New Testament writings do not state with any fulness the specific grounds of Jewish hostility. Why was Paul so bitterly persecuting the Christians, pursuing them even to

Damascus? He says he was exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the fathers.[1] It is not improbable that Christians, especially among the Hellenists, may have manifested some laxity toward the ritual law; but this will scarcely have been so prominent a feature of the new movement at this early date that it can have been the sole ground of Paul's hostility. Moreover Paul's enthusiasm was of a distinctly religious type; he was seeking to do the will of God in order to obtain salvation. But his conversion to Christianity meant that he now found the way to salvation in that which had formerly been the greatest of stumbling-blocks. Hence when he states the chief ground of his hope as a Christian, he probably reveals the item in Christian teaching which had formerly incensed him most, namely, the confession of Jesus' lordship as the result of belief in Jesus' resurrection.[2] It is this confession of Jesus' lordship, based upon the resurrection faith and issuing in the belief that Jesus will

[1] Gal. I:14.

[2] Cf. Rom. 10:9. We have pointed out in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, XXVI (1907), 151–61, that belief in Jesus' lordship was characteristic of Christianity even before Paul's day. This view is still further substantiated by Bacon, "Jesus as Lord" in the *Harvard Theological Review*, IV (1911), 204–28.

in future appear in messianic glory, that constituted the basis of controversy between Jews and Christians. The latter worked up their side of the argument by dwelling upon Jesus' miracle-working ability, his pre-existence, his miraculous birth, and the like. Jews, on the other hand, taking their cue from the Christians' preaching, sought to cast doubt upon Jesus' resurrection, pronounced his miracles to be merely the practice of Egyptian magic, and converted the story of his virgin birth into a charge of illegitimate parentage.

These are the problems confronted by Christian apologists in the days of Justin and Origen, but in all probability similar questions were debated at a much earlier date. They too are the points about which the Talmudic references to Jesus revolve.[1] Though the Talmud in its present form does not carry us back beyond the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., the Mishna probably reflects views of earlier rabbinical opponents like Rabbi Akiba, who, in turn, may have perpetuated arguments and criticisms already in vogue at an earlier date. The *Tol'doth Jeshu*, however, is a much later

[1] We may pass this material by thus briefly, since Strack's *Jesus, die Häretiker und die Christen* makes it so easily accessible.

product, which it seems vain to attempt to connect with primitive tradition.[1] The one fact which impresses us in this conflict of argument between Christians and Jews is the common acceptance of belief in Jesus' earthly existence, and the offense taken by the Jews at the reverence rendered him by Christians. In this respect Jewish sources corroborate the early Christian testimony to Jesus' existence.

It may be urged by the radicals that this whole survey of the extra-biblical sources yields no testimony which is independent of Christian influence. Tacitus may have taken his information from Christian tradition, it might also be said that Josephus knew of Jesus only through Christian sources, and the early Jewish opponents of Christianity admittedly created their polemic as an offset to Christian preaching. Yet it does not follow that this testimony is wholly valueless, much less that its relative scantiness and secondary character is a positive argument against Jesus' historicity. As we have often remarked, this testimony, so far as it goes, is all corroborative

[1] S. Krauss, *Das Leben Jesu nach jüdischen Quellen* (Berlin, 1902) edits and translates this material. Cf. also E. Bischoff, *Ein jüdisch-deutsches Leben Jesu* (Leipzig, 1895).

of, and never contradictory to, Jesus' historicity. And as for its scantiness, that is determined by the particular circumstances under which the literature took shape and the purpose it was intended to serve. To admit that it may all be secondary to New Testament data is a chronological necessity, since the sources examined are all of later date than the earliest oral or written Christian tradition.

But it cannot really be a matter of any great importance that a Roman historian of the second century A.D., or Josephus at the end of the first century, and the Talmudists of a still later date have so little to say of the earthly Jesus. In the nature of the case they could not speak at first-hand, and such information as they would have been able to gather from non-Christian sources can hardly have been marked by anything like the intelligence which would characterize the information given by personal associates and friends of Jesus. To suppose that contemporary non-Christian sources would give us a more purely judicial estimate of the facts is to presuppose that non-Christian writers of the day were exponents of modern critical methods of historical research. This we know not to be true.

The evidence for Jesus' existence is derived mainly from Christian sources. If it is urged that his existence cannot be "proved," as a mathematical theorem perhaps it cannot. But it is equally true that such a proof of his non-historicity is also out of the question. In matters of history "proof" can only mean a reasonable certainty based upon the available data; and, after all, mathematical demonstration has no more ultimate criterion of validity than that of reasonableness. The New Testament data are perfectly clear in their testimony to the reality of Jesus' earthly career, and they come from a time when the possibility that the early framers of tradition should have been deceived upon this point is out of the question. Not only does Paul make the historical personality of Jesus a necessary preliminary to his gospel, but the whole situation in which Paul moves shows a historical background in which memory of this individual is central. The earliest phases of gospel tradition have their roots in Palestinian soil and reach back to the period when personal associates of Jesus were still living; while primitive Christology shows distinct traces of Jesus the man of Galilee behind its faith in the heavenly Christ. The disciples'

personal memory of this Jesus of real life is also the fountain from which the peculiarly forceful type of the new community's vitality takes its start.

CHAPTER IX

JESUS THE HISTORICAL FOUNDER OF CHRISTIANITY

Assured that Jesus of Nazareth was a historical person, we may now consider briefly the religious significance of this fact. In the first place, can he justly be called the founder of Christianity?

Our answer to this question will depend upon what is understood by "Christianity" in this connection. If it is defined simply as "religion," then Jesus cannot be called its founder, for the world already possessed a variety of religions before he and his apostles appeared upon the scene. The Jews for centuries had believed themselves to be in possession of a peculiar religious heritage, and the gentiles were, in their own way, also highly religious. Nor is Christianity unlikely to have had many things in common with other faiths. This would be made necessary by the very circumstances of the time. Christianity's advocates had to solve the same general problems as other religious teachers, and in the main they had to employ for this purpose the common

stock of religious phraseology and thinking. Especially is it difficult to isolate the new religion from its very definite Jewish setting. The members of the primitive community were Jews by birth, and even as Christians they continued to honor the ancestral faith. They inherited their Bible and many of their theological ideas from Jewish sources, and instead of endeavoring to establish an entirely new religion they aimed to bring to completion what they believed to be the true Judaism. Jesus cannot be called the founder of Christianity in the sense of supplying all its phases *de novo*.

It is equally impossible to suppose that Christianity was a finished product in Jesus' day, or that it came into being full-fledged at some particular moment in history. On the contrary, it is a growth. We may assume that its basal elements are to be found in the teaching and work of Jesus, still these historical data had to be supplemented by the disciples' experience and interpretation before the new religion could claim an existence in any formal sense. Even in the most primitive period of its life it is not a fixed unit which one may isolate and call "original Christianity." For instance, it is doubtful whether there was ever

a time when all members of the community agreed absolutely on all questions of belief and practice. At any rate we know there were differences of opinion and even disputes and dissensions at a very early date.[1] Christianity is not a static thing; it is a movement, to whose origin and development many factors contribute. Nor can it be called the work of one individual. Many persons contributed toward its making; it embodied the social experiences of several successive generations.

Except in a very academic sense, all religions are complex products, effected by an evolutionary process extending over a more or less lengthy period. Yet we speak of the "founders" of religion—not meaning that various individuals and different ideas have not been instrumental in the creation of most historic faiths, but indicating that some one person reacted so significantly upon contemporary life and thinking that he so revitalized existing forces, or introduced new ones, as to bring about a movement sufficiently distinctive to be termed a new religion. Thus to say that any individual "founded" a religion can only mean that he furnished the initial impetus without

[1] Acts 6:1; 15:1, 39; Gal. 2:11; I Cor. 1:10.

which, historically speaking, the new movement would not have come into being. Is Jesus to be credited with having done this for Christianity? And, if so, what constituted his distinctive work as a "founder"?

It used to be supposed that he had personally provided the new religion with certain fundamentals of organization. He had spoken of a "church" of which Peter was to be the corner-stone,[1] he had explicitly authenticated the rite of baptism,[2] and had enjoined upon believers the perpetuation of the Lord's Supper.[3] But "liberal" critics now tell us that these items in the tradition are uncertain historically. They may be only the primitive community's formulations to meet its own needs, stated in the light of its developing life and under the conviction that the real intention of Jesus was thus coming to fulfilment. On this understanding of the situation Jesus cannot be called the founder of that organization, with its rites and customs, which the new movement adopted in the effort to make itself effective.

[1] Matt. 16:18. [2] Matt. 28:19.

[3] Mark 14:22–24; Matt. 26:26–28; Luke 22:19 f.; I Cor. 11:23–26. The specific command "do this in remembrance of me" appears only in Luke and Paul.

Is he not more certainly sponsor for the content of the new faith? Did he not found Christianity by becoming the center of early dogma and the object of believers' reverence? Of course it was not "Jesus," but rather the heavenly Christ, who first attracted the theologians' attention and formed the objective of their worship. The earthly Jesus therefore can hardly be called the real founder of the new apologetic, unless it is evident that his career upon earth was an essential factor in preparing the way for and engendering the christological speculation which elevated him, after his death, to a place beside God. But did Jesus by his teaching attempt to school his disciples to think of him in this way? Even in the latest parts of synoptic tradition he is not represented as demanding worship from his followers, while in the earliest narrative his claims for himself are quite obscured by the hearing he would win for his message, in which God only is set forward as the object of man's supreme regard. Much less can it be affirmed that his teaching supplied the whole framework of primitive christological speculation.

Sometimes it is said that Jesus founded Christianity by his death and resurrection.

These manifestly are important items in the genesis of the new faith. Without his tragic death the way would not have been prepared for that item in his saving work of which Paul makes so much, nor could belief in his heavenly lordship have arisen except through the conviction that he had been transferred from the abode of the dead to a position beside God in heaven. But there must have been more than the mere fact of his death behind the early doctrine of atonement, for other heroes had died without being so regarded. Not the mere fact of death but the type of person who had died seems to have been the determining factor in the situation. Still it is doubtful whether Jesus' death would have been interpreted messianically prior to belief in his resurrection, and this leads us to question whether the life of the earthly Jesus has any fundamental connection with the genesis of the resurrection faith.

If the first disciples had been asked this question they would not improbably have answered it negatively. Tradition is almost uniform in representing that their faith did not grow out of Jesus' affirmations of messiahship, nor did it spring from predictions of his death and resurrection. It was only after they came

to believe that he had risen that these items of tradition took on distinctiveness and real meaning. We cannot here examine at length the first Christians' resurrection faith,[1] but evidently they traced its origin to visions of the risen and glorified Jesus. For them it was no mere problem of logical inference from historical data; it was an overmastering ecstatic experience. Yet experience must have its background and its constituent elements, and in the disciples' case the memory of the earthly Jesus was probably a very important factor in the situation. Even if we should accept without question—as probably the disciples did—the objective reality of their vision, we should still have to ask why they connected the heavenly apparition with the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth. This was not the only conceivable course open to them. They might have abandoned Jesus entirely, saying that he had disappointed their expectations, that his claims had been discredited by death, and that God had now shown to them in a vision the true heavenly Messiah for whom they were to wait. This however was not the course they pursued.

[1] Reference may here be made to the present writer's "The Resurrection Faith of the First Disciples" in the *American Journal of Theology*, XIII (1909), 169–92.

They were confident that it was Jesus whom they had seen, and everything depended upon the recognition of this fact. The fundamental surety of their faith was the conviction that Jesus—Jesus of Nazareth, with whom they had associated in the daily walks of life, he who had inspired their discipleship and whose personal influence had left its indelible mark upon them—had survived the obliterating stroke of death. Memory of him is inseparably linked with the primitive resurrection faith. The individual whom they saw was the one whom they longed to see—a fact which, according to our modern understanding of vision experiences, enables us to appreciate the important part which memory of Jesus' life and personality played in the genesis of the new faith.

The result of connecting thus closely the messianic hope with a historical individual was to give special prominence to the personal element in religious life, for which memory of Jesus' own religious personality supplied inspiration and ideals. To be sure, this fact is not set in the foreground of gospel tradition. Here, as would be expected, stress falls upon more formal phases of early theology; yet it is not difficult to perceive, beneath the interpreta-

tive apologetic of the disciples, the vital substratum of their personal experience with the great teacher. The abiding influence of his life was such that they found it possible to ascribe to him the most exalted ideas which the theological thinking of their age could create. Furthermore they acknowledged that during his lifetime they had not been powerfully impressed by his *official* dignity. They did not recognize his messiahship until near the close of his ministry, they failed utterly to comprehend his references to his death and resurrection, they forsook him at his trial, and disbanded without hope after his crucifixion. Previously they may have hoped he would declare himself to be Israel's deliverer, and some bolder spirits such as Peter may have openly expressed the conviction that he would, but still their messianic hope can hardly have been more than a vague expectation conditioned upon some further demonstration of God's favor for Jesus. Once convinced that the divine favor was removed—and Jesus' death was at first taken to mean this—their messianic faith was quickly shaken. The message they heard from the cross was not one of victory but one of defeat: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The memory of personal association with Jesus could not be so easily dismissed. As their faith in his official significance during his lifetime was only secondary to their response to his message about God and to their consciousness that he touched many a sensitive chord in their own religious lives, so after his death they probably suffered more keenly the loss of daily fellowship with him than the abandonment of their faltering messianic faith. Hence the supremely significant item in their vision experiences was not a belief that they had seen the heavenly Messiah, but a conviction that they had seen "Jesus." Though their new activity was much concerned with interpretative items of thinking, in their common daily walk the earthly Jesus came to life again in their memory. They ate together in loving recollection of their former fellowship with him, they recalled his life of unselfish loyalty to the will of God, and they felt a new power and meaning in the words he had spoken. The impress his personality left upon them contained an element of vitality, interpreted by them in terms of resurrection faith, which was more enduring than all their former messianic expectations, and in turn became the basis

of a new messianic hope. Thus the secret of Jesus' influence upon the disciples must ultimately be sought in the content of his own religious life during the period of his association with them. In the last analysis it was his power as a religious individual that made possible the early faith; the personal religion of Jesus was the foundation of the disciples' religion about Jesus.

Therefore, to understand Jesus' position as the historical founder of Christianity we must comprehend more fully than is often done the character of his own religious individuality. His personal religious life has not always received the consideration it deserves. Attention has been centered on other, and perhaps less significant, phases of his career. His miracle-working power, the theological implications of his teachings, metaphysical speculation about his unique personality, these things have sometimes been made the chief items of interest, while his significance as a religious individual has been overlooked. Believers have been wont to regard him so exclusively as the object of their own religious reverence, and consequently have sometimes removed him so far from the normal relations of a historical

person, that they have been in danger of missing the inspiration to be derived from spiritual sympathy with him in his own deep religious experience.

In accordance with our previous conclusions, we shall expect to find the actual religion of Jesus represented most truly in the words and deeds reported in connection with his ordinary daily life. Those phases of tradition which appear to be in the main uninfluenced by special doctrinal interests form a safer guide for our study. It is necessary, too, to remember that Jesus' personal religion is concrete, in contrast with formal and abstract theories about his person. He was connected with a past which played its part in the process of his development, he was surrounded by definite historical circumstances, and he was equipped with his own personal inclinations, his own emotional characteristics, his own intellectual life, and his own spiritual experience. At this late date it is, in the nature of the case, impossible to know everything we should like to know about the historical Jesus, but we may hope to learn something of the main characteristics of his daily life which most impressed his associates.

In attempting to grasp the main content of Jesus' religion, one may seek, (1) those items that belong primarily in the realm of experience, (2) the interpretation which was placed upon experience, and (3) the practical application of religion to life. The first topic pertains more particularly to the source elements in Jesus' religion, the second directs attention to the doctrinal content of his faith; while the third is concerned with social and ethical aspects of his thinking. We are not to imagine that Jesus' religion can be literally divided into distinct and unrelated compartments; our analysis is adopted solely for the purpose of convenience in handling the data.

The sources of Jesus' religion must have been manifold. He inherited richly from the past. For centuries the Jews had inculcated in their children reverence for God and loyalty to his cause, and from this atmosphere Jesus had doubtless absorbed many things that were determinative for his career. His contact with the professional religionists of his time may not have been intimate, but he probably suffered no great disadvantage on this account. The cultivation of the pious life through the consciousness of God's nearness to his people

was quite as possible in remote Nazareth as in the Holy City; indeed those who were free from the constant demands of external ceremony were, on that very account, more likely to preserve a deeper spiritual vitality. Heart purity, pious conduct, sincere motives, and humility before God were less stimulated by attendance upon the temple services than by the study of the great religious teachers of the past; for instance, the words of Micah:

> Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?

The Jewish Scriptures in general must have exerted a strong influence upon Jesus. In the course of his teaching he shows much familiarity with this literature. He frequently quotes it, sometimes in criticism but oftener with approval, and he gives ample evidence of having absorbed its spirit. As would be expected from his early training, his sympathy with

the prophets was especially close. His career seemed in many respects a repetition of theirs, his preaching resembled theirs in that he stood for the moral issues in contrast with ceremonialism, and he anticipated for himself a fate like theirs in the sacred city which had stoned the prophets.[1] He also drew from the lawgivers and the sages. The law which required love for God with all one's heart and the love of neighbor as oneself was accepted by Jesus as fundamental. Likewise the sage's emphasis upon practical precepts and individual right living found a large place in his teaching, but behind all these lay the prophet's consciousness of an immediate relationship between man and God.

A more specific factor in influencing Jesus, and one more directly connected with his appearance as a public teacher, was his contact with John the Baptist. Just what his experience was in this connection began to trouble interpreters at an early date. That he came to John's baptism of repentance might seem incompatible with his consciousness of purity, and indeed his baptism furnished a distinct

[1] Matt. 23:37. Jesus' anticipation of stoning at the hands of the mob points to the genuineness of the passage.

doctrinal difficulty when his sinlessness became an item of dogma. Various suggestions were made to obviate the difficulty. The uncanonical Gospel according to the Hebrews explains the event as follows: "Behold the Lord's mother and brothers said to him, John the Baptist is baptizing for remission of sins; let us go and be baptized by him. But he said to them, What sin have I done that I should go and be baptized by him; unless perhaps what I have now said is ignorance?" This has sometimes been treated as a genuine saying, but it probably is a later development of tradition. It attaches a sacramental significance to baptism, making the ordinance efficacious for a sin of ignorance; and the whole story seems to have arisen by projecting into Jesus' pre-public career the same misunderstanding of his true character which, according to Mark, his relatives shared during his ministry. The Gospel of Matthew offers another explanation. John's objection is overruled by the words: "Suffer it now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." When baptism became a recognized church ordinance Jesus' action seemed best explained as an example for his followers. For the Fourth Evangelist the

baptism of Jesus and the descent of the Spirit were chiefly for the benefit of John. Thus he was enabled to recognize the Messiah and to point him out to his own followers.

No one of these explanations is sufficiently well attested to justify its use in determining the experience of Jesus. At the time there was no occasion for any explanatory comments; the procedure was a perfectly natural one on Jesus' part. John indeed preached repentance and coming judgment, but he also put stress upon the positive qualities of a holy life—"bring forth fruit worthy of repentance."[1] Personal purity of life was a prerequisite for membership in John's community, just the type of life after which the pious people of the land were daily striving. Others must repent and forsake their sins, but it would be unsafe to suppose that only persons of this class came to be baptized—as absurd as to conclude that everyone in modern times who joins a movement for social betterment must previously have been a social

[1] Josephus says of John's baptism: "It signified the purification of the body, supposing that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness" (*Ant.*, XVIII, v, 2). According to Matt. 21:32 Jesus said: "John came unto you in the way of righteousness." This is often called a characteristic addition of the First Evangelist; but it agrees with Mark's account of John, the righteous and holy man whom Herod feared.

outcast. All that may be inferred from Jesus' action in coming to John's baptism is that it marked a decisive step in his active life. It was the response of his own pious life to the religious ideals for which John stood.

As a result of this action Jesus' religious experience would naturally be quickened and deepened. According to early tradition he received at this time an official declaration of his messiahship; but the baptismal incident is told so briefly, and in a form that lies so close to the peculiar interests of the early theologians, that it does not clearly reveal the actual content of Jesus' experience. This picturesque description—the rending of heaven, the descending dove, and the audible utterance of God—shows the primitive Christians' fondness for vivid imagery, while the prominence given to the ecstatic element in their own lives easily led them to interpret Jesus' experience in terms of ecstasy. It is a question whether the primal item in his experience at this time was not his sense of new consecration to God as a spiritual father rather than a recognition of God's choice of him as a messianic son. The account of his temptation which tradition has placed in close connection with his baptism may have been

framed to furnish scriptural authentication for Jesus' failure to display at once messianic prerogatives, yet it testifies to the fact that he did not, as the early Christians well knew, at the beginning of his ministry present himself as Messiah—at least not as the type of Messiah currently expected. And if he entertained the idea at all, he possessed some deeper experience which impelled him to reinterpret this as well as other ideas of the time. The messianic thought did not master him; he was its conqueror not its victim, and he attained this position by placing more stress upon his choice of God than upon God's choice of him.[1] His

[1] Evidence that Jesus' consciousness of sonship was primarily a spiritual experience, based upon his own choice of God as Father, may still be seen in Luke's account of the baptism. In Luke 3:21 both the baptism of the people and that of Jesus are mentioned as simple events (expressed by aorists) falling in the same general period of past time, while Jesus' special experience comes to him during a season of prayer following his baptism (see *Biblical World*, XXXI [1908], 300–302). These have usually been considered secondary traits in Luke, but the opinion is open to doubt. The non-Markan source, "Q," probably mentioned the baptism (so Wellhausen, *Einl.*, p. 74 and Harnack, *Sprüche und Reden Jesu*, pp. 136, 218 f.), and the variant reading in Luke 3:22, "Thou art my son, today have I begotten thee," seems originally to have been taken from "Q" by the Third Evangelist himself. "Q" also may have supplied the note about Jesus' prayer. This source remembered that he continued to address the "Father" in prayer (Matt. 11:25 Luke 10:21), and taught his followers to do the same (Matt.

first interest was not to claim the favors due one who deemed himself to be God's son—even a messianic son—but to maintain that course of life which one should pursue who had made absolute choice of God. It was Jesus' never ceasing care to learn and to do the divine will, and his unfaltering and permanent choice of the Father is the basis of his unique consciousness of sonship. Not only did he thus attain and maintain his own filial relations with the divine, but he advised others to follow a similar course in order to become sons of God.

The problem of Jesus' messianic self-consciousness is too complicated for extended treatment here, as it would unduly prolong discussion and might divert attention from the immediate subject, his personal religious life. Whatever his thought may have been about his official significance, it does not seem to exert any large influence upon his daily experience;

6:9 ff.; 5:44 f.; Luke 11:2–4; 6:28). According to this branch of tradition, which being Palestinian in origin attached less *initial* significance to baptism, at the very beginning of Jesus' public career he showed the same devotional attitude that characterized his ministry to the end. After his baptism he sought with renewed determination to know the Father's will, and in answer to his cry "[my] Father," there came the response "[my] Son." Thus his renewed choice of God as Father was fundamental to his new sense of sonship, and the relation was primarily ethical and spiritual rather than external and official.

and this fact appears even in those narratives which give prominence to his official character on special occasions. Thus when he calls disciples he does not offer them the glories of a messianic kingdom but an opportunity to become "fishers of men"; and later when they question about relative positions in the kingdom he sets before them the ideal of humble service. In his controversy with opponents it is not by virtue of his own dignity but through his deeper spiritual insight that he justifies his contentions; as when he refuses to be bound by current notions about the sabbath, or condemns the "corban," on humanitarian grounds. Again, in the conduct of personal life it is his vital spiritual fellowship with the Father, rather than the thought of official authentication, from which he draws his real help. When weary he retires alone for prayer, and at the last great crisis while in the garden of Gethsemane he ultimately finds assurance not in a renewed conviction of his messiahship but in the consciousness of having submitted himself unreservedly to the Father's will. In all this it is his sense of God's nearness and his determination to choose divine guidance which stand out most distinctly. The fundamental item

in all Jesus' religious experience appears to be his abiding consciousness of fellowship with the Father.

One of the first problems of interpretation to engage Jesus' attention must have been that of determining the character of his mission. This question confronted him as soon as he decided to take up public work. All Israel was looking for salvation and any teacher seeking a public hearing must be prepared to pronounce upon that subject. God was the ultimate ground of all hope, but various ways were being advocated as the best means of inducing him to act in men's behalf. Some held that the strict observance of ordinances was the only way to win the divine favor, but this was emphatically rejected by Jesus and among its advocates he found his severest opponents. The Zealots proposed another method. They would resort to the sword, trusting that God would interfere in their behalf; but Jesus refused to sanction political revolt and is said to have admitted the propriety of paying tribute to Caesar. Still others placed chief stress upon a righteous life as a means of securing the divine favor. This view was supported by much that the

older prophets had taught, as well as by the writings of the earlier and later sages. Two centuries before Jesus, "the son (as was supposed) of Joseph," began his work, Jesus the son of Sirach had said:

Ye that fear the Lord, put your trust in him,
And your reward shall not fail.

. . . . . .

The eyes of the Lord are upon them that love him.
A mighty protection, and a strong stay.

. . . . . .

The Most High hath no pleasure in the offerings of the ungodly,
Neither is he pacified for sins by the multitude of sacrifices.

. . . . . .

To depart from wickedness is a thing pleasing to the Lord;
And to depart from unrighteousness is a propitiation.

. . . . . .

Have mercy upon us, O Lord the God of all, and behold;
And send forth thy fear upon all the nations;
Lift up thy hand against the strange nations;
And let them see thy mighty power.[1]

About a century later a similar assurance that God will ultimately vindicate the righteous appears in the Wisdom of Solomon:

[1] Sir. 2:8; 34:16, 19; 35:3; 36:1–3.

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
And no torment shall touch them.

. . . . . .

For even if in the sight of men they be punished,
Their hope is full of immortality.[1]

Again, the wicked, speaking of the righteous man, says,

He professeth to have knowledge of God,
And nameth himself servant of the Lord.

. . . . . .

The latter end of the righteous he calleth happy;
And he vaunteth that God is his Father.
Let us see if his words be true,
And let us try what shall befall in the ending of his life.
For if the righteous man is God's son, he will uphold him,
And he will deliver him out of the hand of his adversaries.[2]

To some extent Jesus shared these views. He demanded a life of righteousness for the individual, he did not identify trial and suffering with defeat, he taught that God freely forgave the sins of the repentant, that he sustained men in affliction, that he cared for the lowly, that he gave assurance of immortality, that he revealed himself to the righteous, that the righteous man had God for a father and

[1] Wisdom Sol. 3:1, 4. [2] Wisdom Sol. 2:13, 16*b*–18.

was God's son. But in one important respect Jesus deviates from all these teachings: he does not make the hope of favoritism from the divine the principal aim of righteous living. The highest privileges of sonship are not to be identified with temporal blessings, but lie in the opportunity to live the Godlike life in which love, mercy, and self-giving service are dominant to the end.

When Jesus determined that the preaching of this truth was to be his chief mission, he went quite beyond the religious outlook of his contemporaries. Possibly we may have here the key to his interpretation of the current messianic hope. As that doctrine was popularly held, it rested mainly upon the idea of favoritism. This was read into the early history, as seen in Moses' words to Pharaoh: "Thus saith Jehovah, Israel is my son, my first-born; and I have said unto thee, Let my son go: behold I will slay thy son, thy first-born." Here is God's favoritism for his chosen people expressing itself in vengeance on their enemies. Even in Jesus' day this was the essential content of Jewish messianic thought, but it was so at variance with Jesus' fundamental thought that he can hardly have avoided criticizing

it along with other ideas that were lacking in ethical efficiency. Moreover, the prophets had criticized it and John had partially condemned it when he warned the Jews not to trust in Abrahamic descent for future safety.

Jesus went still farther in his criticism. Like John, he did appeal to men to live a righteous life, not however with the ultimate motive of winning God's favor in the day of judgment but in order to attain genuine sonship in the present. This was the way of true salvation, the present realization of the messianic hope, and as the minister of this truth Jesus may have thought his work to be "messianic." On one occasion John is reported to have sent messengers asking Jesus if he is this final minister of salvation. In substance he replies affirmatively, but the proof of his claim was not to be looked for in the establishment of a miraculous judgment of sifting and purging as John had preached. Rather his godlike life of service for mankind was his testimonial. Of course he does not deny the reality of divine favor, and in fact he makes it displace the narrower conception of the divine favoritism: God's blessings abound toward all men, the wealth of his love is unlimited, he desires all

to share in his goodness by making absolute choice of him.

Jesus' doctrine of salvation is determined by this thought of God's activity among men. He is regnant here and now. The nature of his rule is fatherly, he discards all narrow favoritism, he gives himself unreservedly to the interests of humanity, and the ideal for humanity is the realization, on its part, of the godlike life. Jesus prescribes no other doctrinal program for the attainment of salvation: become sons of God in childlike, trustful fellowship, and under the inspiration of this fellowship live the life of unselfish service. It is the urgent desire of God that all men should enter into the full realization of this new life, he is ever encouraging them to do so, and Jesus' work is all directed toward this end. But it is for man to say whether or not he will enter into this new relation. There is no barrier between him and God save that which his own will has erected.

This is the soteriology of Jesus, and its simplicity has almost been its undoing. It lacks the Pauline dialectic, it is free from the theological intricacies of later times, it attaches no vital importance to any form of organiza-

tion, and it presupposes no theory of infallible mediators whether in the form of books or persons. It centers attention on two things: on the one hand is God, immediate, loving, inviting; on the other is man with a free spirit holding his destiny in his own hand. Will he commit his way unto God, and walking in harmony with the divine spirit realize the highest ends of life? Or will he refuse, living for self and the world, and so suffer the unspeakable calamity of shutting God out of his life?

But how shall men get rid of the debt which past sins have laid upon them? Must they not by some means placate an angry God whose mandates have been disobeyed and whose dignity has been insulted by rebellious humanity? Jesus knew no such angry deity. His father would gladly receive every penitent who came; forgiveness for the past was procured by the very desire to forsake it and to live the new life. The real problem was not how to escape the anger of God, but how to break the power of sin which hindered the attainment of the higher life; and Jesus has a remedy for this evil. His contemporaries talked of judgment from which only those would escape who had succeeded in getting rid of sin before

God came, while Jesus preached that God is now present delivering men from their bondage. Personal alliance with the Father is the secret of escape from the present power of evil. Getting rid of sin, instead of being a prerequisite to the divine coming is an integral factor in its realization. Man's receptivity for the divine, rather than his perfect attainment of holiness, conditions the coming of God, and without his presence in life the hope of any worthy attainment is meager. Here is one of the most distinctive features of Jesus' religious thinking: God's presence means salvation, and Jesus, proclaiming this truth in his own career, is the minister of salvation.

In its more external features, the theological thinking of Jesus corresponded in general to the intellectual ideas of that age. The modern outlook upon the world and its history was then unknown, consequently it is vain to look for this in his teaching. He did subject various ideas of the time to criticism and correction, yet not on scientific, but on religious grounds. For example, men then talked of angels and demons in a realistic way and so did Jesus, but in contrast with Jewish transcendentalism, and the attendant development of angelology,

he brought God back from remote regions and made him walk again with men in true spiritual communion. This was no denial of angels' existence, but they could no longer be thought to serve any important religious function. Also belief in evil spirits was not denied, but their power was practically abolished by faith in the nearness and supremacy of God. Similarly other phases of Jesus' teaching employed current thought and terminology, but their essential content was determined by the new vitality of his personal religion. His whole theological method was controlled by his own deep religious experience.

Jesus' religion had also important ethical and social aspects. The conditions of society and the point of view of that age differed so much from those of modern times that the real import of his teaching has not always been grasped. We cannot assume that he had definitely in mind all the problems of modern society, nor is it fair to give his words and deeds the interpretation which modern conditions might place upon them. Perhaps he would have taught and acted otherwise had he been placed in these modern surroundings. So far as his specific words are concerned, they

should always be interpreted in the first- and not in a twentieth-century setting; while for the purposes of modern application one must seek the general principles underlying his specific teaching. These are always fairly evident.

Jesus lays down two controlling principles for the guidance of conduct; God is to be loved with full devotion of heart, soul, and mind, and one's neighbor is to be loved as oneself. Each principle carries with it many practical implications. The first means nothing less than a determination to make God's conduct an absolute standard for life, the rule of the divine is the ideal of human action, sons are to live as the Father lives and to be perfect as he is perfect. Therefore genuine sincerity of motive must characterize all life; so men are exhorted to maintain secrecy in almsgiving in order to guard against pride and hypocrisy, to preserve the genuineness of their devotions by praying to be heard of God and not of men, and, if they choose to fast, to make it a season of secret personal discipline. In the life of the true son no place is to be allowed that type of selfishness which seeks such credit from men as a disfigured countenance, a wordy prayer,

or a public demonstration of generosity might prompt. Jesus seeks to inspire all the motives of life with these fundamentally unselfish qualities.

The character of all action is determined by the ideal relationship between the Father and his sons. They will put his cause first, seeking his kingdom and his righteousness at the cost of all lower ideals; they will be optimistic yet trustfully submissive to the divine will, and they will live the same sort of self-giving life as does he. If he loves all men so must they; if he abhors favoritism they must do likewise; if his interest is to seek and save the lost this must also be theirs; if self-seeking is eliminated from his attitude they must strive to abandon all selfish thoughts; if it is characteristic of him to forgive and forbear they must practice forgiveness and forbearance, in short their entire conduct toward their fellows will be modeled after the perfect standard set by the Father. These were the controlling principles in Jesus' own life. He cast in his lot with the poor and lowly, he despised not the needs of publicans and sinners, he freely gave himself for the sake of others, and when he was smitten he smote not in return but

forbore and forgave because he believed this also to be the Father's will.

Such, in outline, is the personal religion of Jesus. His serene faith withstood the storms that beat against it because it was founded upon the consciousness of vital communion with God. His whole theological thinking was dominated by this personal experience of a divine father whose presence in the world meant a full salvation and whose contact with men inspired them to live the life of self-giving service. This was the Jesus whose personality, whose teaching, whose activity, made Christianity possible.

CHAPTER X

JESUS' SIGNIFICANCE FOR MODERN RELIGION

Jesus' career upon earth closed nearly nineteen hundred years ago. Subsequently the disciples who had personally associated with him carried on, for a few years, a propaganda in his name. Then another generation took up the movement, which had already begun to spread beyond the narrow confines of its original home in Palestine, and ultimately "Christianity" became the recognized religion of the western world. In this course of development many strong leaders championed its cause, new forces from time to time entered into the making of the new faith, and the ordinary transformations incident to a healthful and normal growth were duly manifest. After nearly nineteen centuries of this history we turn back to the shadowy form of Christianity's traditional founder and ask what significance he has for religion today. Remembering the long lapse of time, the comparative incompleteness of our knowledge of Jesus' earthly career, and the changed conditions of the modern age,

it is not surprising that some persons should feel our question to be an idle one.

Furthermore, in the course of Christian thinking as a whole, reflection about Jesus has usually taken its departure from some prevailing type of speculation rather than from historical data. To begin with, the peculiar world-view of the primitive believers, who thought in terms of Jewish messianism and who looked for the end of the world in the near future, was employed for this purpose. But for Greek Christians neither of these ideas seemed supremely valuable. The latter was soon denied by history, and the former was too particularistic to be retained in its original form. Jesus' chief significance was now sought in the realm of metaphysical speculation, which, though varying somewhat in form at different times, has been the usual method of indicating his superior worth. In all this the historical Jesus was almost wholly ignored. Not that there was any conscious deviation from the traditional records of his career, but interpreters easily discovered there the particular type of person needed as the counterpart of their christological speculations. Hence the picture of Jesus which has been chiefly before

the minds of believers from time to time has been a product of interpretation rather than a plain portrait of the individual who lived in Syria centuries ago.

This result was quite unavoidable. If Jesus was to have supreme value for successive generations of Christians he had to be reinterpreted in terms of the ideas which came to hold first place in each new age. It was impossible for believers of the second century to maintain, with those of the first generation, that Jesus' worth could be adequately measured by the expectation of his return upon the clouds during the lifetime of some who had been personally associated with him while on earth. Each new phase in the history of Christian thinking has been confronted by a similar problem with respect to the Christology of the past. Should Jesus be newly evaluated in terms of the newer thought? At the outset perhaps only a few theologians answered this question affirmatively, but ultimately their opinions prevailed just in proportion as the new intellectual outlook gained currency. If interpreters had left Jesus inextricably bound up with past modes of thinking then they must have abandoned him outright, or have allowed the needs of their

age to pass unheeded. If he was to be saved for developing Christianity it was necessary that he be reinterpreted.

It is perfectly natural, therefore, that moderns should ask how they are to estimate Jesus' significance. An evaluation of him in terms of modern thought would seem to be inevitable. Many persons may be satisfied with some form of traditional Christology, but there are others who feel compelled to adopt, in their treatment of religious problems, the methods of critical inquiry which they recognize to be valid in other fields of study and a world-view which harmonizes with the data of modern knowledge. If Jesus is to have any vital significance for their religion, interpretation of him must be phrased in the language of present-day thinking.

The motive of this effort to understand Jesus anew should not be misunderstood. An expression of doubt regarding the validity of former views is sometimes looked upon as an attempt to disparage Jesus. On the contrary, its real aim is to obtain a more adequate means of appreciating his worth. One may question whether the first interpreters' speculations about him can lay any stronger claim to finality than can their cosmology, but the

world has not lost its meaning because it has been newly interpreted—in fact it has taken on a much larger meaning. If it is assumed that Jesus' chief significance lies in the speculative garments in which his earlier followers draped him, then there is danger that he lose prestige; but if he is discovered to have essential worth quite apart from their theology, the attempt to estimate his significance from the standpoint of modern thinking is scarcely to be feared.

Yet the modern situation raises a more fundamental issue than that formerly presented at critical periods in the history of christological development. Heretofore interpreters have quite uniformly centered attention upon the so-called Christ of faith. It has been the Christ-idea, the idea of a Savior-God perhaps we may say, that has held first place in Christian thinking. How slight, for example, was Paul's interest in the earthly Jesus apart from the saving significance which Paul attached to Jesus' death! Similarly, subsequent interpreters made it their chief task to expound Jesus' worth as the mediator of a God-assured salvation for mankind, the form of the dogma varying to suit current ideas about the world

and man in relation to the deity. In all this it is the divine, heavenly Christ rather than the human, historical Jesus which stands in the foreground of interpretation. On the other hand there is now a strong demand that christological speculation definitely relate itself to the actual Jesus of history, and the serious question is whether this can be done without detriment to our estimate of Jesus' worth for religion.

Three ways of meeting this problem have been proposed. (1) Some interpreters assert that the main content of traditional Christology finds historical substantiation in Jesus' earthly career. (2) Others do not think the history supports the traditional views, and accordingly they would construct a new Christology from the material brought to light by their critical study of Jesus' life and teaching. (3) Yet others find the connection between his historical personality and the religion of men today so unimportant that they eschew all christological speculation and treat him as merely one of the phenomena—more or less significant—in the history of our religion. These three main types of opinion need to be examined more closely in order to bring out the distinctive issues of our present problem.

Those who hold the first of these opinions would make the worship of the heavenly Christ the distinguishing mark of modern as well as of primitive Christianity. Hence the Jesus of history is not to be differentiated from the Christ of faith, since it was in the latter capacity that Jesus actually presented himself to men, even during his earthly career. That is, he claimed to be an anthropomorphized deity, and was so recognized by his believing followers.[1] To this fundamental tenet of traditional Christology "liberals" raise two general objections. They maintain that (1) critical inquiry upon the life and teaching of Jesus does not allow this reading of the history, and (2) a modern world-view cannot adopt this type of metaphysical speculation.

[1] Cf., among the more recent discussions, Garvie, *Studies in the Inner Life of Jesus* (New York, 1907); Grützmacher, *Ist das liberale Jesusbild modern?* (Gr. Lichterfelde, 1907); Nolloth, *The Person of Our Lord and Recent Thought* (London, 1908); Denney, *Jesus and the Gospel* (New York, 1909); Jordan, *Jesus im Kampfe der Parteien der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1907), and *Jesus und die modernen Jesusbilder* (Gr. Lichterfelde, 1909); Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (Boston, 1909); Dunkmann, *Der historische Jesus, der mythologische Christus und Jesus der Christ* (Leipzig, 1910); Warfield, *The Lord of Glory* (New York, 1907), and "The Two 'Natures' and Recent Christological Speculation" in the *American Journal of Theology*, XV (1911), 337–61, 546–68; also several contributors to the *Hibbert Journal Supplement*, "Jesus or Christ?" (London, 1909).

It is unnecessary here to re-examine in detail the content of primitive interpretation.[1] The results of historical criticism are now well known, and for those who accept these results it is evident that the Christ of faith was thought of at first as an individual soon to come in glory. Jesus upon earth may have inspired messianic hopes in some of his immediate associates, but these hopes were not identical with those which followed the resurrection faith, and which resulted in giving the risen Christ a position in the reverence and worship of his followers nearly identical with that of God. Only by degrees did interpreters come to find qualities in the earthly Jesus which enabled them to portray his life in terms of their thinking about the heavenly Christ. This was accomplished by explaining away such seemingly contradictory features as his death, and by making the blindness of the disciples responsible for their generally admitted failure to perceive in him, while with them on earth, the characteristics which they later ascribed to the heavenly

[1] See above, chap. v. Cf. also J. Weiss, *Jesus im Glauben des Urchristentums* (Tübingen, 1909) and *Christus: Die Anfänge des Dogmas* (Tübingen, 1909); Granbery, *Outline of New Testament Christology* (Chicago, 1909); Bacon, *Jesus the Son of God* (New Haven, 1911).

Christ. Thus thought passed from the Messiah to come, and centered itself upon the Messiah who had come.

Then arose the question how he had become such. While the future was looked to for the manifestation—or for the chief manifestation—of his messiahship, the question of "how" was answered in the language of apocalypticism, but as emphasis upon the messianic quality of his earthly career grew stronger new answers had to be found. These needs are met by recalling his spiritual endowment at baptism, his virgin birth, and the incarnation of the *logos* in him. At first faith was directed toward an angelic figure whose uniqueness was yet to be revealed; then thought was fixed more firmly upon an earthly individual especially endowed with divine favor, and from this it went on to regard Jesus as actual deity anthropomorphically manifest. If we consider historical criticism alone, it does not follow that this last stage of interpretation may not be the most accurate and valuable explanation of the significance of Jesus' personality; but to carry this back into Jesus' own teaching and to make it the most primitive and the only type of early Christian thinking is what causes offense in the eyes of "liberal" historical critics.

The second main objection urged against the traditional Christology is the extent and character of its emphasis upon the supernatural. Many now feel that this way of picturing God's relation to human life and history is too mechanical to give a religiously adequate estimate of Jesus. According to the newer world-view, unprecedented and seemingly extraordinary events in history need not be assigned to other-world causes in order to give them significance. This world is now far richer in reality than it was for the ancients. Then it was barren and narrow and could be enriched only from without, while for moderns the enrichment has come increasingly from within. In proportion as the conquest of the normal has enlarged, confidence in it has increased, and the need for the abnormal has gradually grown less. This is no impoverishment of the spiritual possibilities of the universe, but it does mean the elimination of externalism, freakishness, and arbitrary intervention in the normal world-order. So it follows that in interpreting Jesus the category of supernaturalism is felt by many to be an inadequate way of picturing his worth, and this is not because he has lost significance but because the category has done so. This

situation is seen more definitely, for example, in the use which has been made of certain terms to indicate the idea of his deity, terms which no longer fitly answer to the conception of deity even when they are used of God himself. To be sure, it was inevitable that primitive thought upon this subject should move in the realm of physical relations, employing such ideas as defiance of the course of Nature, unlimited exercise of the powers of sense, and the like; but today it is believed that more comprehensive and spiritual terms are needed to express the idea of God and his relation to men.

Accordingly a more liberal type of interpretation proposes a different way of ascertaining Jesus' significance for modern times. In contrast with the foregoing procedure, it would use a minimum of metaphysical theory and a maximum of history in its evaluation of Jesus. To some extent this is a concession to the reaction against supernaturalism begun by the rationalists a century or more ago, but the rationalists are not always followed all the way. The crasser forms of belief in the supernatural are eliminated, but in treating Jesus he is commonly felt to be historically so unusual, and to answer so ideally the spiritual cravings of the

soul, as to be a unique agency for bringing God and man together.

The antecedents of this mode of interpretation may be traced back even to Herder, whose reason would have led him to ally himself with the rationalists but whose poetic sensitiveness of spirit enabled him to find religious worth in miracle narratives. Schleiermacher's contribution in this direction was more significant. He too did not give first place to miracles, but he emphasized the immediacy of religious feeling and so found God revealed in the personal life of Jesus, particularly as described in the Fourth Gospel.[1] Similarly Ritschl saw a revelation of the cosmic purpose in the historical Jesus, who, being the unique embodiment of the religious ideal which faith craves, has the value of God for us. Thus he is the supreme revelation of God in history.

The more recent exponents of this general method still further reduce the amount of supernaturalism allowed. Relatively minor stress is placed upon specific deeds and words of Jesus, while emphasis rests mainly upon his

[1] We should remember that Schleiermacher came before the days of scientific literary criticism of the gospels, and he found the absence from John of the more abundant miracle display of the Synoptics rather gratifying.

historical personality. His consciousness of a peculiar relation to God, the unique vitality of his own religion, the height of his religious ideals, and the like, are made the chief basis for an estimate of his significance. Accordingly the essence of Christianity does not consist in holding any given set of beliefs about Jesus, but in the reproduction of his type of life.

But in order to measure more exactly Jesus' significance for modern thinking, how do the "liberals" define his uniqueness? The traditional explanation, which modern liberalism rejects, is very simple and—granting its premises—very satisfactory: Jesus is unique in that he comes into the world from without. He is not a product of the present world-order; he is rather a new contribution to its life. Liberal interpretation of the more usual type prefers a less strongly dualistic world-view, but it does not always content itself with defining Jesus' uniqueness in a strictly naturalistic manner. He is held to be a normal product of evolutionary laws and is purely human, yet in some vague and undefined or indefinable way he stands apart—a gleam of light out of the eternal world. So Warschauer,[1] who in general does not appeal to the

[1] *Jesus: Seven Questions* (London, 1908).

supernatural for evidence of Jesus' worth, speaks of Jesus as the one "sent in the fulness of time," the "crowning instance" of the divine immanence. Harnack puts stress upon the idea that God is truly manifest only in personal life, and that Jesus reveals his uniqueness both in his own unparalleled God-consciousness and in his ability to awaken in believers an assurance of divine sonship.[1] Similarly Wernle recognizes a supernatural self-consciousness in Jesus which differentiates him from the rest of humanity;[2] and Schmiedel notes that Jesus "had something to offer which appeals to every human heart in the universe and is to that

[1] Cf. *Christianity and History* (London, 1896, pp. 36 f.), *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig, 1900, pp. 81 f.; English tr., *What Is Christianity?* New York, 1901, pp. 127 ff.). *The Twofold Gospel in the New Testament* (Berlin-Schöneberg, 1911, pp. 10 f.; translated from the report of the *Fünfter Weltkongress für freies Christentum und religiösen Fortschritt,* Berlin, 1910, pp. 151 ff.).

[2] *Die Anfänge unserer Religion* (Tübingen, 1904², p. 28): "Das Wunderbare bei Jesus ist das Zusammensein des übermenschlichen Selbstbewusstseins mit der tiefsten Demut vor Gott. Derselbe Mensch, der ruft: Alles ist mir vom Vater übergeben worden, und niemand kennt den Vater als der Sohn, antwortet dem Reichen: Was nennst du mich gut? Niemand ist gut, als der Eine Gott. Ohne das Erste ein Mensch, wie wir, ohne das Zweite ein Schwärmer. Jesus selbst hat sich als Mittler empfunden. Der Mittler ist durchaus Mensch, ohne Abzug, aber er hat von Gott einen besonderen Beruf und Auftrag an die Menschen bekommen, und dadurch überragt er sie." Cf. English tr., *Beginnings of Christianity* (New York, 1904, I, 40).

extent eternally true. Above all he possessed a religious nature of such strength and purity as have never to our knowledge been combined in any other person."[1] Bousset hints at a distinction between "transient" and "eternal" in the personality of Jesus, who is the symbol of the divine idea and the supreme example of a God-directed human life.[2] Thus Jesus, according to this school of interpretation, has significance in two directions: (1) Most conspicuously is he a model human being, a uniquely successful seeker after God, and so an abiding example and inspiration to his fellow-

[1] *Jesus in Modern Criticism* (London, 1907, pp. 88 f.).

[2] *The Significance of the Person of Jesus for Belief* (Berlin-Schöneberg, 1911; translated from the report of the *Fünfter Weltkongress für freies Christentum und religiösen Fortschritt*, pp. 291–305). Cf. Troeltsch, *Die Bedeutung der Geschichtlichkeit Jesu für den Glauben* (Tübingen, 1911, p. 50): "'Gott in Christo' kann für uns nur heissen, dass wir in Jesus die höchste uns zugängliche Gottesoffenbarung verehren und dass wir das Bild Jesu zum Sammelpunkt aller in unserem Lebenskreise sich findenden Selbstbezeugungen Gottes machen." Weinel says: "Aber wer in ihm das Ideal auch seines Lebens erfasst, der erlebt an ihm auch Gott" (*Ist das "liberale" Jesusbild widerlegt?*, p. 84). Whether Bousset is to be reckoned among the representatives of this second type of interpretation seems to some of his readers doubtful. They would assign him to the third group. Thus Wobbermin (*Geschichte und Historie in der Religionswissenschaft*, Tübingen, 1911, pp. 47–72) thinks Bousset's treatment of Jesus as the "symbol" of the divine no longer allows him any significance as a source of our religion.

men who are engaged in a similar search. (2) He is yet more. Though not himself God, yet as an illustration of God's self-revelation in a human personality he transcends all others who have gone before or who have come after him. Thus he virtually becomes a bearer of something from God to man in the mystical realm of spiritual life. His chief significance lies in helping humanity God-ward, but in some less distinct yet real manner he brings God man-ward.

Advocates of the third main attitude mentioned above take exception to the foregoing interpretation. They object to the retention of the smallest remnant of philosophical dualism in one's thought about Jesus, however skilfully such dualism may be veneered by admiration for Jesus on grounds alleged to be strictly historical. They refuse to entertain any world-view which is not absolutely monistic. God and the world are one in the most rigid sense, and his activity is not to be differentiated at any point from the totality of the cosmic flux. There are, to be sure, variations in matters of detail among exponents of this monistic faith. Some put stress upon mysticism, and so find the fundamental unity by absorption into an emotionless Nirvana—a view which Schopen-

hauer and Richard Wagner, for example, employed in thinking of Jesus. A kindred line of thought emphasizes the identification of God with the universe, as illustrated more recently in the pantheistic interpretation of Christianity by E. von Hartmann[1] and A. Drews.[2] Perhaps their metaphysical theory might be termed a monism of divine will, the will of God being identified with the world-process. Others subordinate the thought of God to that of matter, thus producing a distinctly materialistic monism like that of Haeckel, according to which Christianity and Jesus are purely naturalistic cultural products and have no further significance. Others advocate an idealistic monism in which mind is the unifying concept—an inheritance from Kant and Hegel with the last vestiges of dualism eliminated. Here the final test of all religious values is determined by the dictates of reason.

It follows that emphasis upon the supreme

[1] *Die Krisis des Christentums* (Leipzig, 1888), *Das Christentum des neuen Testaments* (Sachsa, 1905), *et al.* Cf. also von Schnehen, *Der moderne Jesuskultus* (Frankfurt, 1906); Anderson, "The Collapse of Liberal Christianity" in the *Hibbert Journal*, VIII (1910), 301–20, and "Whitherward?—a Question for the Higher Criticism," *ibid.*, IX (1911), 345–64.

[2] *Die Religion als Selbst-Bewusstsein Gottes*, *Die Christusmythe*, *et al.*

value of history for religious thinking does not appeal to the monist. For him the essential in Christianity is not belief in a sensuous yet supernatural revelation of God in Jesus Christ, nor is it a reproduction of the religion of Jesus. It is rather the embodiment of ideas and ideals resulting from the modern man's reaction upon the whole realm of reality—past and present—available for him. The personal religion of Jesus, the religion of his disciples, religious life in all ages, even among adherents of non-Christian faiths, are valuable for modern reflection, but, according to this view, Christianity at heart is a matter of spiritual immediacy in each new age and is fundamentally neither a historically nor a miraculously mediated product. It is primarily an attainment, not an inheritance. The present indeed has a rich inheritance from the past, particularly in Christian history, but present-day Christianity, on this understanding of its character, is the total embodiment of the actual religious attainments of modern men in a modern environment.[1]

[1] This point has recently received new emphasis in the Jatho-Harnack controversy. For example, Wernle asks whether Protestantism is essentially a definite historical quantity, or whether it is something which every man may formulate to his own liking. Wernle adheres to the former notion and finds his historical *Grösse*

This idea, that religion to be vital must be cut loose from historical moorings, is not altogether "modern." It arose with the conception that ideas rather than events are the most significant items in religion, and reason rather than history is the proper tribunal for judging the validity of religious truth.[1] The application of these principles to modern liberalism results in its condemnation on the ground of its "sickly" metaphysics. Its claim that a historical phenomenon can be set up as an ideal of absolute worth is held to be a contradiction in terms. For if the ideal has once been actually realized then it becomes something static, may be transcended, and so is no longer the highest ideal. Hence, from this standpoint, to set up the historical Jesus as in

in Jesus, who, though strictly human, exhibited so unique a spiritual life "dass wir uns in dem Menschen Jesus von Gott berührt wissen." Jatho, on the other hand, admits the desirability of drawing upon the past for all possible help in the cultivation of spiritual life, but declines to regard Jesus so authoritatively. He is inspirational but in no sense normative: "Was je von Wert und Bedeutung über Gott gesagt worden ist, trägt sein Mass in sich selbst, d.h. in der Persönlichkeit, welche es sagte. Nur für diese ist es massgebend, für keine andere." See *Die Christliche Welt*, XXV (1911), 878 f., 916–19, 946–51.

[1] Cf. Lessing's dictum: "Zufällige Geschichtswahrheiten können der Beweis von notwendigen Vernunftwahrheiten nie werden."

any real sense a culminating revelation of God, or to treat him and his teaching as normative for later generations, is condemned on principle. And to overlook speculative considerations is felt to be a neglect of the only criterion available for the adequate estimation of religious values. Nothing can be of permanent religious worth except ideas which have eternal and cosmic significance. Even Strauss said: "Our age demands to be led in Christology to the idea in the fact, to the race in the individual; a theology which, in its doctrines on the Christ, stops short at him as an individual, is not properly a theology, but a homily."

It is also urged that not only is anything in the nature of a historical absolute intrinsically impossible, but Jesus is not so ideal as liberal theology supposes. As a matter of historical fact, it is said, the modern picture of him cannot be established with certainty. Wellhausen remarks that we cannot go back to him even if we would,[1] while others think we know

[1] And further: "Dadurch, dass man den historischen Jesus zum religiösen Dogma macht, wird man schliesslich gezwungen, wie die alten Rationalisten 'die historische Bedingheit' von ihm abzustreifen (*Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien*, Berlin, 1905, p. 115). Cf. Strauss: "Der Jesus der Geschichte, der Wissenschaft, ist lediglich ein Problem, ein Problem aber kann nicht Gegenstand des Glaubens, nicht Vorbild des Lebens sein."

him too well as a man of his own age to admit of the "liberal" idealization. So Schweitzer affirms: "It is nothing less than a misfortune for modern theology that it mixes history with everything and ends by being proud of the skill with which it finds its own thoughts—even to its beggarly pseudo-metaphysic with which it has banished genuine speculative metaphysic from the sphere of religion—in Jesus, and represents him as expressing them." This representation of him is thought to be a pure fiction, "a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in a historical garb."[1] Thus exception is taken, on grounds alleged to be purely historical, to the general claim of ideality which the "liberals" usually make for Jesus. His ethical principles are declared to be antiquated, if indeed they are not to be pronounced more seriously defective when judged by modern standards. And his attitude of indifference toward the ordinary relations of life, his other-worldliness, makes his example and teaching, so it is said, relatively worthless for modern needs. The liberals are charged

[1] *The Quest for the Historical Jesus* (London, 1910, pp. 396 ff.; German, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, Tübingen, 1906). Cf. Pfleiderer, *Early Christian Conception of Christ* (London, 1905, p. 12).

with absurdity in surrendering Jesus' world-view—phrased as it is in terms of the Ptolemaic astronomy and Jewish apocalypticism—while they yet hold to the validity of Jesus' view of life. It is urged that this too should be set aside, for his is the ideal of an age "which knew nothing of the demands of modern life, or of a further and further development of humanity here upon this planet." Upon the most burning problems of our day he had nothing to say; "the state and the family, the laborer and the employer, these fundamentals of our existence have for him no worth."[1]

How shall moderns find their way through this maze of opinion about Jesus? Shall they apply the metaphysical test for determining his worth? If so they have a long road to travel, and must spend much time and energy discussing the relative merits of different types of speculation. For many today the category of supernaturalism, at least in its traditional form, seems to be discredited, while others still think it fully valid. Looking at Jesus from the speculative point of view, those whose world-view is such that special value attaches to alleged happenings lying outside the course of

[1] F. Lipsius in *Berliner Religionsgespräch*, p. 80.

natural law will be able to retain the terminology of the ancient faith; others may resort to the speculative notions of later times, perhaps adopting the Hegelian postulate of the divine idea, thus removing the miracle from the physical sphere into the realm of ideas; still others will wish to level the thought of Jesus down to the ordinary plane of human experience; and in no instance will the results of one set of interpreters seem at all adequate to those who view him from a different standpoint. After all it is not Jesus and his worth, but it is a world-view which is at stake here.

Can a more satisfactory outcome be attained by applying the historical test? The answer to the question would seem to depend largely upon what one is seeking in the history. Sometimes historical criticism has been asked to state what it has fixed upon as the pure facts about Jesus. Can it tell us whether he was miraculously born, whether he was really God, whether his physical body was raised from the tomb, and give other information of a similar character? To answer candidly, the historian cannot give a final reply to inquiries of this sort. He can observe the place of these items in the early faith, the probable date of their appear-

ance in the literature, and the special theological interests which they originally served, but he cannot produce a mathematical demonstration either for or against their validity. There are two main reasons why he cannot do this. In the first place his earliest sources of information were not given literary form until a generation or more after the events, and so the narratives are liable to be colored by the pious fancy of the primitive interpreter; and in the second place these problems are primarily speculative rather than historical. The question of the quality of the phenomena is involved, and it cannot be answered apart from some metaphysical theory. Nor is a type of historical study which is content with determining the content of primitive belief wholly adequate for modern needs. Much of the phraseology and many of the thought-forms of primitive Christianity do not correspond to modern men's ideas of what constitutes the highest values in their world of thought. This is not strange when we remember that modern scientific ideas, the evolutionary interpretation of the world, the comparative study of religions, and the present complex conditions of society must of necessity enter into the making of any vital

type of modern religious thinking. One who goes to history to discover an infallible christological dogma to be made normative for all men in modern times must expect to be disappointed in his search.

Is it desirable therefore to surrender the notion that Jesus has any essential worth for one who accepts the results of recent historical research, and whose world-view is of the so-called modern scientific type? Since Jesus cannot be "proved" to be an anthropomorphized deity, and history cannot be thought to contain infallible dicta for modern religion, why not break the "entangling alliance" between religion and history and permit the present, in its thinking about the significance of Jesus, to be absolutely a law unto itself? This need not mean that he is to be wholly ignored, but his worth would be merely incidental and would be discovered in the contribution which thought of him has made to the history of religion rather than in his actual historical career.[1]

[1] On the relation of history to modern religion one may note Harnack, *Chistianity and History;* Troeltsch, *Die Absolutheit des Christentums und die Religionsgeschichte* (Tübingen and Leipzig, 1902), and "Glaube und Geschichte" in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, II (Tübingen, 1910, cols. 1447–56); Lovejoy, "The Entangling Alliance of Religion and History" in the *Hibbert Journal*, V (1906–7), 258–76; Eck, *Religion und Geschichte* (Tübingen, 1907); Wobbermin, *op. cit.*

The rigid application of this method is also unsatisfactory. In the first place it lends itself too readily to subjectivism. Merely from the standpoint of scientific method, must it not be said that moderns are already exercising too freely the liberty of making what they please out of Jesus? One has only to recall the present situation to realize the danger in this direction.[1] Some are saying that he was not a historical person, or, if he lived at all, comparatively nothing about him can now be known. For others he is a historical character, but one of a very different sort from that portrayed in the gospels. Sometimes his Semitic ancestry is doubted, and he is even made the exponent of Buddhistic doctrine, teaching a self-redemption to be attained by a complete suppression of all desire. Others see in him an ideal teacher of pantheism. For others he appears in the likeness of the Old Testament prophets speaking for the righteous God of Israel; or, again, he is more like a contemporary rabbi, or one of the Old Testament sages. Many represent him to have been a neurotic visionary who faced death in the

[1] Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus;* Weinel, *Jesus im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1907); Pfannmüller, *Jesus im Urteil der Jahrhunderte* (Leipzig und Berlin, 1908), may be consulted for a survey of types of interpretation.

confidence that he would soon return upon the clouds to vindicate his supernatural claims. Still others find in him an ideal social reformer, and even the exponent of anarchistic principles. Again, he is sometimes thought not to have been a religious enthusiast but a typical ethical theorist. For others he stands forth as an ideal modern theologian who took special pains in his teaching to furnish future generations with doctrinal proof-texts. Nor has the history failed to yield for still others specific proof of Jesus' supernatural personality.

This situation makes imperative the exercise of a discriminating historical research, even if one has no further end in view than the interests of scientific scholarship. But it is also fundamental for interpretation of Jesus. If one chooses to think of him at all, intelligent reflection must proceed from the most objective facts which can possibly be obtained. And to estimate the significance of historical personalities, one always desires to look upon the individuals, in so far as this is possible, as they actually appear in the ordinary relations of daily life. Their deeds and words then take on a new vitality. Modern evaluation of Jesus cannot break with history, but it must, if any-

thing, be more strictly historical than past interpretations have been.

Yet it is not to be imagined that an accurate acquaintance with history is of itself a guaranty of piety, or that the discovery of the actual historical Jesus will supply any ready-made, normative christological dogma. Piety is primarily a personal attainment, with respect to which the historical Jesus can have significance only as a stimulus and an inspiration. And Christology is, in its last analysis, an estimate of Jesus' worth for the individual interpreter. Nor can history claim to supply the ultimate realities of personal religion. The essential item of religion for the individual is, admittedly, a spiritually enlightened religious consciousness, and to know what Jesus said or did, or how he lived, may be less valuable than is the religious heritage of historical Christianity handed down from age to age in his name. It is sometimes said, and not without a degree of truth, that life's religious values would not be essentially affected even if it should be discovered that Jesus was no such ideal personage as history represents—if indeed belief in his existence should have to be surrendered—since it is primarily the ideal and not the person that is significant

for moderns. Whether Jesus made this ideal, or whether someone else was its author is, therefore, thought to be of minor importance.[1]

On the other hand it will be generally admitted that meditation upon the life and work of Jesus has been eminently valuable in stimulating religious living among believers in all ages. Various ideas about him were sometimes surrendered to meet new thought-demands, but to have given up entirely the notion of his existence, and so to lose the inspiration of his pious personality, would have been disastrous for Christian faith throughout the greater part of Christendom. The contemplation of the objective, notwithstanding the serious perversion to which it is always liable, has usually been, and not improbably will continue to be, an important means of cultivating religious life. Some masterful spirits may be able to reach the heights of religious attainment otherwise, but the majority seem destined to climb by the more laborious path

[1] In the *Hat Jesus gelebt?* controversy it is granted by some "liberals," though they stoutly defend Jesus' existence on historical grounds, that Christianity would not collapse if belief in Jesus' historicity had to be surrendered. Cf. also D. C. Macintosh, "Is Belief in the Historicity of Jesus Indispensable to Christian Faith?" in the *American Journal of Theology*, XV (1911), 362–72.

where they lean hard upon the past for support and encouragement. And not infrequently, too, they, with their narrower vision it may be, will regard those who have come up some other way as thieves and robbers. Moreover, there are many Christians with whom the intellectual aspects of life hold an important place, and they are particularly desirous that their ideas about Jesus shall be compatible with historic fact. Under these circumstances it is not a question of dispensing with history but of enlightening its pages and making it furnish the utmost possible aid for the practical religious needs of modern times.

Historical study, it would seem, can render a more valuable service in the present situation by disclosing the grounds of the primitive Christians' faith, than by attempting to supply a definite christological dogma. The first believers certainly had their doctrines, yet they had something else more fundamental. We have already seen that the Jesus who founded Christianity was not a mere dogma. He was a religious individual with whom the disciples had intimate personal association, and from whom emanated an influence sufficiently powerful to support their strong, bold type of interpretation and to inspire the

loyal quality of life which they exemplified. The force of Jesus' personality, expressed and perpetuated in the work of the disciples, is amply attested in the success of the new movement. Judas of Gamala, Barcochba, and even John the Baptist, seem to have had quite as many adherents to preserve their memory as did Jesus, and the circumstances which attended them were hardly more adverse than those through which he passed. Yet their cause failed while his succeeded—a significant testimony to the vital impress his personality left upon his disciples. The exceptional manner in which he awakened the deeper elements of religious faith gave the new religion a stimulus by which it conquered even so stubborn a foe as Saul of Tarsus.

Unquestionably there were many contributing factors in the genesis of the primitive faith. The resurrection appearances, antecedent messianic notions, possible personal claims of Jesus to messiahship, all exerted their influence; yet it is perfectly clear, as we have earlier remarked, that these things were not uppermost in the disciples' minds when they first recalled their life of association with Jesus. The earliest gospel tradition is explicit in stating that the

predictions of his resurrection fell upon unresponsive soil; while belief in his messiahship did not take shape until near the close of his ministry, and even then it was a faltering hope which quickly vanished under the shadow of the cross. We are not to imagine that memory of the historical Jesus was in any large measure at first linked with these interpretative ideas. That this fact can be seen in the present form of the tradition is all the more significant in view of the special needs for the framers of the tradition to show that the later faith in the risen and exalted Messiah was consonant with the disciples' actual recollection of Jesus. We may believe that the features in his life which made the most abiding impression at the time were not any claims of his to high official dignity, either for the present or for the future, but the strength of his own forceful personality. Indeed it may be that we shall not go far astray if we think of this as a very essential factor in the genesis of the resurrection faith, as well as in stimulating the first Christians' messianic belief. It is not strange that Jesus' early followers should ultimately have made him the object of their worship, or that men today should be similarly moved; but we must not lose sight of

the fact that his personal religion rather than the religion about him was of fundamental importance. He lived religiously and thus inspired believers to live similarly.

From this standpoint his worth for moderns lies primarily in the content of his life, as history discloses his superior personal efficiency in the spiritual sphere. He has for men today the same essential value that he had for the primitive disciples, in so far as history permits acquaintance with him, and he answers modern needs. He has usually been, and one may venture to think he always will be, esteemed according to the degree in which he aids men in their struggle for salvation. But since for many persons today it is no longer possible to make the external element central in the thought of salvation, some forms in which his worth was formerly phrased may have to be set aside. Nevertheless the power of his person and his message continues to be a mighty inspiration prompting modern men to the worthiest spiritual attainments and encouraging them to realize in their own lives a genuine experience of God. In this respect he is now, as he always has been, the great Savior. The maintenance of harmonious relations with

the divine, and the emulation of the Godlike life in one's own life, is still a great religious ideal. Moderns may wish to phrase it in more secular language and call it the establishment of right relations with the universe, or it may be stated in the warmer, richer phraseology of Jesus and called the demand for the realization of spiritual sonship to God. But struggle as we may with terms, the ideal remains, and not the least important feature in Jesus' significance for many moderns will be the fact that his religious life reveals the secret of transforming the ideal into the real.

The general spirit of his life has been felt continually and broadly wherever the memory has been preserved. The high standards of righteousness maintained by Christians today, their emphasis upon brotherly love, the control of noble ideals in their lives, are a heritage from him. The theoretical question of whether these things would have been realized without him, however answered, does not alter the fact that thousands have found the inspiration which comes from him their mainstay in the struggles of life. Many persons today are repeating the experiences of the past in this respect, and even the twentieth century, with all its inventive

skill, can scarcely hope to furnish a better agency for the propagation of righteousness and personal piety. True, Jesus was not the first to admire virtue nor the first to preach righteousness. Before his day the marble statue of goodness had been unveiled and its graceful proportions admired; but he succeeded as other artists had not in putting a throbbing heart within that marble breast, thus infusing it with the warmth of real life. He gave a personal demonstration of the possibilities of noble attainment by showing that trustful fellowship with the Father enabled one to live the life of personal purity, to maintain the optimistic spirit, to cherish the attitude of brotherly kindness and social service. If we could peer into the secrets of Christian life in past ages we might find that much of the credit interpreters have taken to themselves for presenting Jesus effectively to men has been quite secondary in comparison with the winning force of his life. The power of Christianity is in its life, the lives of believers lived in likeness to and under the inspiration of the life of Jesus.

By thus seeking the basal element for present thought in a study of the real content of Jesus' life, one may escape the perplexities of ecclesi-

astical dogma without sacrificing the essential thing which inspired the creeds and yet sometimes eluded them. Failure to recognize that the personal religious life of Jesus lay at the basis of all genuine interpretation seems to have been a weakness of theologians from the beginning. Even the first disciples, who were deeply impressed by their life of association with Jesus, preferred to set in the foreground their own inferences about the meaning of his career. And eventually the efforts of later believers to account for the original force of his personality became entangled in grave logical difficulties regarding such problems as how he could be both truly God and truly man, or how he could be God by the side of God himself, and yet Christians hold to belief in only one God. The creed makers' efforts to fix the content of belief by much definition of phrases answered the needs of their day, but modern interpretation must go behind the dogmas which have gathered about Jesus and make his historical personality its corner-stone. And it would not be surprising if this should ultimately mean a more significant appreciation of Jesus' worth for religious thought than would be possible on the basis of any amount of

metaphysical dualism which the oriental imagination or the ancient Greek philosophy was capable of inventing.

Yet we may at first be disposed to exclaim: "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him." As the women at the tomb were vainly yet anxiously seeking the living among the dead, so it frequently happens that seekers after truth experience a shock when they find their former ideas transformed into new shapes at first hardly recognizable. But if the new conserve the values of the old the transformation may ultimately prove a blessing, notwithstanding the inconvenience of a temporary disturbance of thought. The first disciples passed through dark hours of agonizing experience before their new faith in the living Lord emerged, but it proved to be a new power in their lives enabling them to retain the estimate of Jesus which their personal contact with him had inspired. Indeed, when the limitations imposed by the earthly relationship were removed the disciples were able to paint their picture of his worth with far bolder strokes than had formerly been possible. The changes in christological doctrine which have come about from time to time in

the history of Christianity have sometimes cost believers pain, yet changes were necessary if Christian thought of Jesus was to maintain its vitality.

Newer types of interpretation seem to have proved adequate just in so far as they preserved the vital content of the older views, and at the same time answered the thought-demands of their own day. Today the older metaphysics, in terms of which Jesus has usually been interpreted, is unsatisfactory to many persons. To meet this situation efforts are now being made to go behind all former christological theories to the historical Jesus, and with a knowledge of his life as a basis to estimate his significance in the light of spiritual rather than external relations. It will doubtless be generally conceded that this method is in harmony with certain phases of modern thought, but still it may be asked, Does it conserve those elements which made the older Christology valuable and effective?

At the basis of all past interpretation of Jesus lie two ideas to which chief worth has been attached: men have found in him their ideal for human life, and they have regarded him as the concrete embodiment of their highest

thought of God. These values have been formally expressed in the doctrine of his perfect humanity on the one hand and his absolute deity on the other. All christological speculation may be said to have described its orbit about these two foci.

No one is likely to doubt that the former of these underlying values is preserved by the modern historical method of interpretation. Surely nothing could bring out more emphatically Jesus' worth as an ideal for life than the effort to fix renewed attention upon his earthly career. In fact modern demands are not satisfied with a merely objective contemplation of his career, or a parrot-like imitation of his action; the present calls for men who not only have seen Jesus standing in a niche of the past, but who see him today beckoning them on to the realization of the noblest attainments in the modern world of action. For them Jesus is more than a pattern to be copied, he is a demonstration of spiritual power to be felt today by those who have received the unction of his spirit.

Is the second of these main values also conserved? As already indicated, the doctrinal form by which it has usually been expressed

presupposes a metaphysical theory now become for many modern minds obsolete and unworkable. According to its presentation God impinged upon the universe from without, he projected himself into human history, he expressed his love for men by a semi-legal transaction making salvation possible; in short, the more external features of Jesus' career were coupled with current notions about the deity to form a concrete setting for these notions. Without question, this phase of Jesus' value for the religious experience of that age had to be estimated in this currency if estimated at all; and just in so far as men today find greatest satisfaction in thinking of God in terms of externalism will they still need to picture Jesus in this way if he is to have important religious significance.

But the converse is also true. Those who feel that the most vital experience of the unseen can be adequately pictured only in spiritual terms will probably derive greater religious satisfaction from meditating upon the spiritual content of Jesus' life. Under these circumstances it will seem more important to seek in Jesus help for worthy living and enlightenment for one's thought of God than to try to frame

an interpretation of Jesus in the language of any predetermined metaphysical theory. The problem, then, is not to decide upon the kind of Jesus which is demanded by one's ideas of God, but to attain the vision of God which a knowledge of Jesus makes possible. Ancients and moderns alike feel that God who is "unknown" is less immediate than Jesus who has visibly appeared upon the stage of human history, hence Jesus becomes immediately helpful in clarifying and enriching human experience of the divine. In his loyal service for humanity is found the manifestation of divine love; in his religious life the reality and power of spiritual communion with the unseen are vividly expressed; his teaching and his conduct inspire loyalty to the divine will; in brief, when human life is brought into close touch with Jesus' life, he so clarifies one's sense of moral obligations and one's consciousness of spiritual realities that he becomes a most valuable aid to a better vision of the Father. He who pictures the unseen Father in spiritual likeness to Jesus of Nazareth will find a new meaning in the words: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

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